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1906

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THE SMART SET

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A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XVIII

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Bertha Annie Palmer

Mrs. Potter Palmer

From a photograph by Steffens

NEWS AND THE MAN

BEING THE FULL NARRATIVE OF THE STOLEN STORY AND THE STRANGE
ROMANCE IN THE CAREER OF BILLY WOODS

By Jesse Lynch Williams

PART I

IN THE BERKSHIRES

THE beautiful Miss Cunningham seemed to be causing a commotion in Park Row this afternoon.

To be sure, she was far away at Fernleigh in the Berkshires, graciously making tea on the terrace for her father's guests and quite unconscious of brewing trouble anywhere. Yet, down in a dingy newspaper office many miles from her, with the rumble and roar of the teeming streets coming up through the dusty windows, a tall, reserved young man was endeavoring to put down a mutiny of which the girl up there was the innocent cause. It was a sort of disturbance no one—she least of all—would expect to see the cynical Billy Woods concerned with. And indeed no one saw it, since the commotion was confined entirely to his own breast.

"Something queer going on at Fernleigh. Take the first train up there and see what you can make out of it." That had been the command, in the usual incisive tones of the taciturn city editor.

But instead of the usual responsive glow of the dark, listening eyes deep-set under straight brows, the grave young man had blinked as from a sudden blow.

Now, in giving out assignments the city editor had learned to watch these rather remarkable eyes, and when the unconscious signal was not

flashed back he knew that this eccentric member of his staff—so brilliant when interested, so worthless when not—had failed to "see his story in it." In such cases the editor was likely to try him on something else. But in the present instance it was so obviously the story of the day, and Woods was so obviously the man for it, that this unaccountable whim seemed as perplexing as it was annoying.

The editor began citing reasons for believing in the queeriness of the things going on at Fernleigh.

"Oh, I understand all that," interrupted Woods, with a quick gesture. "Course it's a good story, but you see—I know the Cunninghams personally."

"All the better—the old man'll know you can be trusted with the inside story."

Woods smiled absently. His thoughts were not on "the old man"—not by a whole generation. His recoil from the notion of invading her atmosphere was not merely because the rather young girl on the broad terrace stood for all the grace and dignity of life so completely lacking from the news point of view; there was another reason.

The last time he had seen her he had decided that it would be just as well to let it remain the last time. It was not good for him to be there. And as staying away could hardly inconvenience her, he was sailing for England in a fortnight to take the vacant post of London correspondent.

The eyes had undergone another unconscious change at the thought of this resolve. The alert editor noticed it, misread it. "No one could handle this story as you could, Billy," he said coaxingly.

Woods knew that, too; he was not impressed. He hardly listened as the editor went on. "It was queer enough when an old aristocrat of General Cunningham's stripe joined Tammany—country isn't over its shock yet—former Cabinet officer and all that—a man who came within an ace of the Presidential nomination, mixing up here in municipal politics. But when he invites Jake Shayne, Jerry McCarter and others of that sort to spend Sunday at his country place! He must be getting dotty, eh? Or else—what's he doing it for, Woods, what's he doing it for! The old fox wouldn't fetch that gang up there for fun. Something will be doing up there this evening, something big. And if you get the facts you'll have a beat on the whole town."

And still the eyes failed to focus on the story, even though it held out the possibility of exclusive news—the one thing regarded seriously in the newspaper world. Ordinarily the editor was a man of few words. "Oh, well," he broke off abruptly with the impatience of one who had cast pearls before swine, "if you don't want it—plenty of others who will."

"Who said I didn't want it?" returned Woods sullenly, and impetuously grabbing some copy paper which he thrust, folded, into his pocket, he stalked out of the room, cane swinging, head thrown back, glasses sliding down—the manner so well-known along Park Row.

"There goes Billy Woods, off on a big story." The young reporters nudged one another as he passed out. "Got the best nose for news in New York."

The city editor allowed himself a quiet smile. He thought he had brought Woods around.

It did prove to be a "big story"; as

it turned out, the most important in the whole remarkable career of "the great Billy Woods," so called by young hero-worshippers, but it was neither flattery nor his news sense that led him to it. Certain other instincts were not yet burned out of him. While the editor had talked, one phrase had penetrated the mist of the young man's abstraction, gripping his mind: "Must be getting dotty!" No one knew those guests at Fernleigh better than Woods—not even their host. And if the "old fox's" eyes were becoming dim with age, God help the old fox among that flock of vultures. Doubtless the sudden impulse which turned the young man toward Fernleigh would have amused the dignified old statesman. A reporter to the rescue! But here again the young man was not concerned about the old one, but for his daughter, who would suffer if he did.

For neither had all the romance and knight-errantry of youth been torn from him by the heartless realities he confronted in his daily duties. Even reporters sometimes have their little dreams.

II

DIGNIFIED old gentlemen have their dreams too. General Cunningham's long-cherished project for the benefit of his native city seemed about to reach realization. The plan for which he had wrestled so persistently with his fellow-commissioners ever since he had accepted the presidency of the board, was at last being crystallized in the form of a bill to be presented next week at Albany and rushed through both Houses—almost before the newspapers might have a chance to gain their breath for screaming. It was no other than the famous Cunningham bill providing water-front parks half-way around Manhattan Island.

It was partly as a subtle recognition of their worthiness in coming to his broad view of the question, partly to put the finishing touches upon the bill in uninterrupted seclusion, that General Cunningham, to the horror of

his sister, Mrs. Metcalfe, and the amusement of his daughter Frances, had invited his confrères of the board to spend the week-end with him at Fernleigh.

During the progress of the banquet that evening for celebration and mutual admiration, while Woods was still on his way to Fernleigh, Miss Cunningham, becoming bored by dining in the library with her indignant aunt, decided to wander out upon the terrace, the night being warm. Next it pleased her to cross the court to the other wing of the house for the purpose of seeing some of the fun through the dining-room windows. Mrs. Metcalfe, to see that no harm came of it, followed with the resigned expression of an aunt who has long since ceased hoping to control a motherless niece.

Frances was young. She looked especially so this evening, in white. Her demeanor was piquant, unconventional, with far more assurance than a girl of her age was entitled to. Mrs. Metcalfe put it down to ignorance of the world she had so recently entered, being too secure in her position there to be conscious of it, or to look down upon those not so blessed. And the aunt prayed that she might retain the charm of this after she had gained knowledge of many other things—which was not unlike her other hope, that the girl's figure would retain its present slimness after the lines of her neck became more rounded.

The dinner had already reached a hilarious stage. Mrs. Metcalfe, a rather imposing person, tried to take humorously, but yielded to her natural impulse to be scandalized, which she enjoyed much more. "Frances! Isn't it dreadful!"

"But think how nice it is for them, aunty, to get reformed." She peered down the broad allée toward the lake. A man was crossing the irregular patches of moonlight and shadows cast by the trees to the east. "Who's coming?" she asked.

"It's Gilbert. I sent for him," said Mrs. Metcalfe in an authoritative tone,

intended to veil any possible note of guilt in it.

Frances repeated Oh, and asked Why.

"To help us," Mrs. Metcalfe replied, and looked toward the dining-room as though reproaching its ill-timed silence.

Frances repeated "Oh!" and continued to watch the young man approaching with his dignified, deliberate strides.

The Townsends always took this short cut from their place. Gilbert Townsend was an intellectual-looking man of thirty, and elected to wear diminutive side-whiskers, about the size of dominoes. A specially blocked, unfashionable hat proclaimed his scorn of ordinary city smartness. But along with a superfined manner, he was possessed of the observing eye. He was not very tall and stood stiffly erect as if to make himself reach higher, though more likely this was merely from feeling the necessity of balancing the weight of wealth and responsibility which had descended upon his head two years ago with the death of his well-known—some would say notorious—father. It was this weight, no doubt, which pushed his fine, sensitive eyebrows down upon the rims of his spectacles and made him walk and talk with the air of a man to be reckoned with. With women his manner was graceful, even courtly, with an old-world repose not understood by those who laughed at it. With men he was seldom so much at ease. Most of them looked upon him as a harmless millionaire of the less prevalent type, who cherished honest if visionary ideals of bettering the world and spoke rather too frequently of Wealth as a Sacred Trust, and said nothing about the unsacredness of the trust by which his wealth had been acquired.

In his daily life he affected the English ideal—not because it was English, as his detractors sneered—but because it seemed ideal to him. He seldom used the town house, despised the city and its social strainings, though retaining the inherited box at the opera because he believed

in encouraging the arts as well as numerous charities, at which he kept two secretaries busy. Much of his own time he spent abroad or in the country, where he was interested in Jersey cows and an Italian garden.

Mrs. Metcalfe had gone forward to meet him, followed less eagerly by Frances. "Ah, Gilbert," the former greeted him, with an air of relief, shaking his hand effusively. "It is so good of you," she said.

"My time is at your command—always," returned young Townsend, bowing low. "How do you do, Frances?" he said, advancing toward her with a quizzical smile, and again bowed low, but with a difference, over her extended hand, taking it delicately as though an object of rare beauty, and fragile; whereas it was merely of rare beauty, as she knew.

Frances gripped his fingers like a golf club. "Hello," she said, and tried to pronounce it vulgarly.

"Mother has guests for the weekend," he murmured to her with his fastidiously modulated tones, "but your message said 'Come at once!'"

"Awfully nice of you, Gilbert," said the girl. "But I didn't send any message."

"I knew it would bring him, my dear," Mrs. Metcalfe put in, smiling, "if I said *you* wanted him."

Frances shrugged her shoulders, not ill-naturedly. "But I don't. Do I, Gilbert?" It was her recent note with him. He did not fancy it, but over-looked it.

"Here they come!" cried Mrs. Metcalfe in a sudden panic.

"Stand fast, aunty," whispered Frances encouragingly.

The three moved into the shadow as the dinner party filed through the open door, voluble and vulgar, all smoking long cigars arrogantly.

"Why is he sending them into the garden?" whispered Gilbert. He, too, was rather scandalized by the general's recent move.

"To meet you," suggested Frances.

"He should pack them off to bed," declared Mrs. Metcalfe.

"Perhaps they need fresh air," hazarded the girl.

The ladies pointed out to Gilbert the various celebrities descending the steps in the flooding light of the open door. They were by no means of one type. First came Major Shayne, whose profession was Law and whose practice was Politics. "Looks disappointingly meek," was Gilbert's whispered comment. With him was Sam Nordheimer, wholesale whisky, Shayne's running mate and sometime understudy; a bully but a coward at heart, as Shayne knew, who used him. Murphy and Munger, black-mustached, frock-coated, more common tribal specimens, one fat and the other thin. Behind them jovial Jerry McCarter, well known and beloved of everyone about City Hall. Shayne and Nordheimer were dressed in evening clothes and seemed to be at ease in them. But Jerry had clung to his accustomed creamy-gray frock coat with a pink carnation in the buttonhole; all seemed in jovial after-dinner mood, but he, like one or two others, had unmistakably taken too much of the general's champagne, and wishing to express his appreciation of everything in sight he waited by the door to join the dignified old gentleman bringing up the rear. McCarter, not being in a listless mood, employed the interval in assisting his fellow-guests down the terrace steps until, this becoming monotonous, he decided to accelerate their descent instead, which he accomplished with varying success.

At last the late secretary appeared, clearly concerned over the condition of some of his guests—which was why he had suggested leaving the table and all that stood thereon, but still looking his part: aristocratic mien, heavy, dignified presence, urbanely gracious in manner, old-fashioned, at times florid, in expression—a statesman of the old school, surrounded by politicians of the new.

"Say, how about it, giniral?" McCarter exclaimed, considerably pointing out the moonlit landscape that spreads out before one on the

terrace at Fernleigh. "Good as Coney, eh?" And, grabbing his slow-moving host by the arm, he endeavored to demonstrate his appreciation by showing those in the garden below how well he and the general could do a cake-walk by moonlight.

"Watch papa trying to look democratic!" whispered Frances.

"How can you laugh?" reproved Mrs. Metcalfe.

"What else can I do?" asked her niece. "Gilbert, you are a man; this is where you come in."

Gilbert hesitated, then achieved an inspiration. Hurrying across to the general he whispered his suggestion. In a moment the entire dinner party was marching ecstatically down the allée to enjoy a launch ride on the lake by moonlight. Gilbert, bringing up the rear, waved his long, graceful hand to the ladies as he descended the lower steps.

At about this time Woods was changing cars at the junction.

Before the unregretted departure of the hilarious party, Mrs. Metcalfe had whispered to Gilbert that there was another reason for her sending for him. The nerve specialist had ordered the general to go abroad and to stay there for a year, and Frances was to go with him.

This news made Gilbert lean forward with interest. "When do they sail?" he asked.

"In a fortnight," she replied significantly.

"Thank you," said Gilbert, also with significance.

Turning to Frances, Mrs. Metcalfe looked at her young niece for a silent second or two. It was one of those remarkably temperate evenings that sometimes stray, by happy mistake, into late Indian summer. The moon was climbing above the trees, making the Chinese lanterns look ashamed. It was still rather early. Neither seemed inclined to go indoors. Mrs. Metcalfe spoke first. "How long do you propose to keep him dangling?"

Frances pretended not to understand. But her aunt did not consider

this worth noticing and went on, "Don't you think, my dear, that before you sail——?"

"I haven't asked him to dangle."

Mrs. Metcalfe reminded her of the fact that everyone thought them engaged already. And Frances reminded her that this was her aunt's fault.

Mrs. Metcalfe took up the old theme of how different was Gilbert from most young men of great wealth. "Instead of selfish dissipation——" she began.

"It takes more than that to account for his unpopularity," put in Frances, wishing to cut it short.

"Think of the good he does." Her aunt was not to be cut short. "The reading-rooms he establishes——"

"With his name plastered all over them."

"It is a good name."

"I don't want it. Let him give it to dispensaries."

"All the same," returned her aunt, laughing, "I believe that deep down in your heart you're still tremendously fond of him."

"Of course I am," said Frances.

Mrs. Metcalfe raised her eyebrows, and replied whimsically, "I could wish that you would not agree with such frank readiness." Then she added in a more serious tone than she intended, "Frances, I sometimes fear you're becoming fond of——someone else."

"What nonsense!" That was a sufficient reply, but the girl went on, "Of course not," and supplemented, "How could you conceive such an absurd idea!"

"I could wish you did not disagree so readily this time. I'm afraid that proves my suspicion."

The girl moved toward the steps. "Such a tiresome, such a silly suspicion."

Mrs. Metcalfe was laughing. "Before you go in, you might tell me whom we are talking about."

The girl hesitated a moment, then turned and joined in the laugh. "It was natural, though, for me to think you meant his cousin——"

"Very natural."

"Don't be tiresome, aunty. I mean because he is a cousin, and a contrast." She turned toward the steps again. "Mr. Woods merely interests me."

"Oh, he merely interests you," Mrs. Metcalfe mused aloud. "I hope he does not interest you as much as he alarms your father and me." The time had come to speak. "Now, my dear, no doubt this handsome young bohemian——"

"He abhors the bohemian pose, by the way." Frances waited, only to defend him.

"—seems very romantic and fascinating to a girl of your age——"

"Do you know," put in Frances, stopping on the steps meditatively, "I never think of him as exactly fascinating."

"Dear, dear," thought Mrs. Metcalfe, "is it as bad as that?" And abandoning her unfinished sentence, she began another in a different tone of voice, approaching her niece tenderly. "I hesitate to interfere, but, my child, you were left motherless at a rather critical age."

"Oh, that's all right," returned the girl, embracing her. "We are delighted to have you at Fernleigh, aunty darling. And I shall be quite broken-hearted if that persistent old Judge Lansing——"

"How absurd!" exclaimed Mrs. Metcalfe, wondering if he really did seem so old to others.

"But, my child," continued her niece with gravity, "you were left husbandless at a rather critical age."

Mrs. Metcalfe laughed. "I must beg you to be serious, Frances."

"I am. I think it's scandalous, aunty."

"Your father and I," returned Mrs. Metcalfe, no longer smiling, "cannot help feeling much concerned about this interest you manifest in all sorts of people." The girl seemed anxious to escape and turned toward the steps, Mrs. Metcalfe rapidly pursuing with, "When a young man squanders all his patrimony in one year——"

"Isn't *that* interesting!" interpo-

lated the girl, teasingly enthusiastic, from the top step.

"—in folly and wickedness——"

"A dark past!" said the girl, looking down at her aunt, "that makes such a dramatic background for a brilliant future!"

Mrs. Metcalfe was interrupted but not diverted.

"—who has been cut adrift by his own family——"

"Makes him so pathetic, doesn't it, aunty? Good night."

"Why, the man's a mere reporter," pronounced Mrs. Metcalfe with an air of finality. "Gilbert, his own cousin, says so."

Frances came back again. "A man who has won world-wide fame as a war correspondent," she said with spirit, "rescued a besieged garrison by his personal daring, and received the public thanks of Parliament for it"—she paused—"I fancy can stand being called a mere reporter by a mere millionaire whose only achievement is tossing back to the masses a few of the many dollars his unscrupulous father——"

"Frances!" Mrs. Metcalfe interrupted her niece's unconscious betrayal of the depth of her interest. "Have respect for the dead."

"Did he ever respect the living, that wolfish old man?"

"But surely you know that nearly every prominent family in New York is directly or indirectly interested in the trusts! Your own father was once Mr. Townsend's attorney."

"And that's the only blot on father's career."

"Besides, Gilbert is not a mere millionaire." Mrs. Metcalfe smiled, frankly worldly. "He's a multi-millionaire." She did not like the vulgar phrase, the use of which she excused with a shrug, but she wanted the meaning to sink in.

Her niece's reply, "Very commonplace thing nowadays," showed the girl's point of view. "Know a dozen of 'em," she added.

"Well, I am thankful to say you do not know dozens of interesting reporters." Mrs. Metcalfe was sparring

for time. "Why doesn't this harum-scarum cousin of Gilbert's remain a war correspondent?"

"When the war's over?"

"Then why isn't he an editor or something?"

"Because he says it's more fun to write."

"But after all, to be a mere reporter——"

"A war correspondent is a mere reporter, with a pith helmet on. He said so."

"But it is so much more respectable."

"A historian is a mere reporter surrounded by a library."

"H'm. He said so?" Mrs. Metcalfe rather had her there, but did not stop to exult. "If he weren't so erratic," she pronounced condemningly, "he would keep on writing novels. It's so much nicer."

"Aunt, I don't suppose I ought to tell you this. But he wrote 'Avenging City' as a burlesque on the pseudo-historical romance, with an average of two sudden deaths a chapter, on a bet that it would find a publisher, and it did—and the public took it seriously! Among others, yourself."

"Then why didn't he do it again?"

"He tried to, but you see this time he took it seriously—and failed. But I don't see why you think it is so much more respectable to scribble lies about the Court of Louis XIV. than to unearth the truth about the intriguing rulers of our own city and their court—on Fourteenth street."

She paused and sat down on the bench, somewhat overcome by her own eloquence. No wonder it made him cynical, she thought. William Peyton Woods, the dashing young war correspondent and the author of a book much sought by school-girls, housemaids and old ladies, was winned and dined, while honest Billy Woods, one of the anonymous writers of the daily history of civilization, was despised and spurned—away with the reporter!

Mrs. Metcalfe looked at her romantic young niece critically. Finally she said, arising to go in, "Frank, there's just one thing I want you to promise

your old aunty." She applied her wheedling tone. "In these two weeks before I get you safely away on the *Cedric*, you will not let this man make love to you?"

"Let him, aunty? Why, I can't make him. I never saw such a man." She looked critical.

Mrs. Metcalfe laughed and threw up her hands in despair. The child was incorrigible. "I wish you could be serious, Frank," she said.

"I can be—with Billy Woods. That's one of the nicest things about him." She sat down by the fountain, with chin in hands as if to talk it over. "He treats me as if I really knew something, and listens in that intent, grave manner to everything I have to say—except when I am listening to him, and then I am intent and grave, too. It's lots of fun."

"Suppose he asked you to marry him. Would you listen to that, too?"

This word drove all the banter out of the girl. "No," she said, jumping up. "I wouldn't. I don't want to marry any of them." She turned her back on her aunty and added, with some asperity, "If you and father really want to marry me off, you will have to stop talking about it. Didn't your generation ever think of anything but marrying? Did you always sit around this way?"—she resumed her seat on the bench and imitated the pose of an old daguerrotype—"with your hair smacked down over your temples like this, doing fancy work"—she burlesqued a sentimental sigh—"until he came to call? Then, when he was announced, you were all in a foolish little flutter on the horse-hair furniture!"

She also burlesqued the flutter and went on patronizingly to the amused Mrs. Metcalfe, "But with us of today, you see, men are merely an incident, aunty dear, like horses or golf, or books—one of the necessary parts of the day's program." She stopped and glanced at her aunt. "To be sure," she was frank enough to add, "they are about the best fun of the lot, but—dear me, nothing to get so excited

over. Now, for instance, when a man calls on me——"

"Mr. Woods, ma'am," announced the butler on the terrace.

"Oh, good gracious!" Frances ejaculated, her hands flying to her hair, while she gave a still more convincing portrayal of a young person in the act of fluttering.

III

Woods came down the steps rather briskly, passed by on the other side of the fountain, and looked about so intently for someone else that the ladies thought at first that he had not seen them at all. His keen glance darted here and there over the garden, through the pergola, down the allée and finally, with a slight movement of annoyance, swung round to the ladies to whom he now offered a reserved, if deferential bow, and remained uncovered, with eyes down, as if to make amends for his momentary abstraction.

For a reporter he was a rather scholarly-looking person, with a good nose and glasses which slid down persistently. He had a slight stoop—a becoming one, Frances thought—was tall and dark, but not in the least mysterious, despite his very deep-set eyes and the sometimes lowering brows over them. This was what the girl had referred to—rather disappointedly, by the way—when informing her aunt that he was not exactly "fascinating." The ever-changing quirks about the corners of his mobile mouth were too human and too humorous to let him seem mysterious or impressive very long. Indeed, the note of his personality, when in repose, as he now was or seemed to be, suggested bland, impractical guilelessness. But when once his interest was aroused in anything, he became oblivious of everything else and showed another personality; intense, enthusiastic, full of fire and force, dropping his former absent-minded indifference behind, like the blanket of a fresh half-back called into the game from the side-line.

These changes were sometimes so great that they seemed almost like transformations in their suddenness, surprising those who did not know him, with the unexpected dominance and tremendous nervous energy of the real man broken loose. His impractical guilelessness was then seen to be but a shell—some said a deliberately worn veil, but this was not true—which covered a practical knowledge, if not understanding, of men and affairs on two continents, with more intimate personal information obtained at first hand of personages and places worth knowing than was possessed, perhaps, by any other man of his years on either continent. As with most of his profession, his information was chiefly of the outsides of things, though he thought as they all do, that he knew the rest, because so often aware of the unprinted "inside story." But his knowledge was exceedingly broad, if not deep, and was universal in its miscellaneousness. His deductions, so far as he ever consciously made any, were youthfully cynical—absurdly so for a man supposed to have the opportunity for observing all sides of life in perspective.

Young Woods could not only talk on every topic under the sun with an intelligent rapidity that made slow-thinking men blink—and with illuminating facial expressions which made women look for them—but, what was far more important to himself and made him more entertaining to others, he could make others talk whether they wanted to or not. It was said that the busiest bank presidents and the most sphinx-like foreign ministers would "open up" for him as readily as a theatrical press-agent. This, of course, was the over-statement of hero-worshippers, the fact being that many would talk to him when they would talk for no other interviewer, and it was not merely because he could be relied upon, as most interviewers with an established reputation can, to keep out of the paper more than he put in.

"How do you do?" Mrs. Metcalfe had said, with cold distinction. "How

do you do?" straightway echoed Frances indifferently. She had assumed the elevated eyebrow poise of the modern young woman and glanced at her aunt to see if she appreciated it, then looked back at him.

At this Woods took a quick step forward and stopped. His movements were impetuous and elastic, giving the effect of flashes that are finished before the mind apperceives the impression furnished by the eye. "They told me he was out here," he said with deliberation. His voice was low and well modulated, his enunciation as free from the provincialisms of New York, where he had spent most of his manhood, as it was from those of the South, where he had been born, though he lapsed into the latter when excited. He had been educated in Europe.

"Father is out in the launch," said Frances. "He may not be back for two hours. But he doesn't want to see you, anyway."

"I know that," said Woods, and took out his watch. Two hours was a long period at this stage of the newspaper day, especially when it is Saturday. He scowled and shook his head. The paper went to press early Saturday night.

"But if there's anything I can do in the meanwhile," the girl threw out tentatively, with a glance at the lake and the moon now glinting it. The young man made no reply.

"Unfortunately," put in Mrs. Metcalfe, near whom the servant had waited to seek instructions for the next day, "there is a great deal that I must do. Good night," she said, not very enthusiastically, and, shaking her head warningly at her niece, she reluctantly left the two young people in the moonlight. She could have managed without going in, but she was a wise enough obstructionist to know that such a policy might only prove a boomerang.

Woods had bowed mechanically. He was trying to forget both of the ladies, and wondering what to do about this matter of two hours. He had discovered long since that the telephone had been taken out. He knew that

the nearest telegraph office was fourteen miles distant by rail. He had bribed the operator to stay open late. The last chance of reaching this means of communication with the night editor, before the paper went to press, was a late train which could be stopped on signal at the semi-private station of Fernleigh.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked the girl, watching his intent face as she sat down upon the bench.

"No, thanks," he said.

"Oh, one of those absent-minded fits," she said, waiting patiently for it to pass.

"Is there another launch?—do you know which way he went?—could I borrow a rowboat?—which way did he go?" She liked this flashing, rapid-fire manner of talking which made him seem all energy and electricity, but she did not say so.

"Father went up the lake," she made answer. "You might swim. I beg you not to let me detain you. Good night. I trust you will enjoy the water." She had turned and was now walking lazily up the steps.

He dashed after her, both hands reaching out, as though he meant to lay hold of her. But when she turned at the top of the steps she found him scowling and businesslike once more. "But I simply must see your father," he said, with a glance toward the lake. The glance did not stay there.

She plucked a leaf from a bay tree. It was with one of the wonderful hands he had written verses about, though she did not know that. The moon, still higher, was now also looking at her.

"Tremendously busy and important personage, aren't you?" she mused aloud with mock awe. "I hear you were in Washington again the other day." Woods made no reply to this. "Felt called upon to give the President some more advice, I presume," the girl went on, looking down at him. "Do you know, I should think you'd find it a bit trying at times, having such a large country on your hands—besides writing books and seeing that foreign

kings get their crowns on straight and running over to Japan to manage the affairs of the Eastern hemisphere, and all that."

"Oh, you don't mind it when you get used to it," said Woods, entering into her mood, or pretending to, as an excuse for looking up at her and forgetting that he should not—and this stopped the argument abruptly. He had a very intent way of looking. Perhaps he allowed more to come into his gaze than he intended, relying on the shadow to hide it, for she turned her eyes away and he feared he had annoyed her. "Two hours, you think?" he asked her.

She looked back at him, apparently quite unannoyed, as if he had not come far enough into her existence for that. "I suppose I ought to be very proud of myself to know you at all," she went on in her chaffing tone, talking as usual of what he preferred to forget when with her. "Oh, I am. I can say, 'I know him. He frequently lets me speak to him—when he isn't too busy. He consults me on how long I think my father will be gone.' What do you want with my father, Mr. Woods?"

"Make him tell me something he doesn't want me to know," the reporter said, as if disinterested.

"What?" she inquired.

"The reason for all this," he replied in the same calm, disinterested tone.

"All what?" asked the girl.

"Why, this rather extraordinary house-party."

"What house-party?"

"Pretty well done for a—" Woods humorously pretended to check himself.

"For a girl, I suppose you mean?" Frances turned away from him. "Oh, you make me so furious sometimes." But curiosity got the better of her and she turned back again. "How did you find out about it? I think it's dreadful the way the newspapers get hold of everything. But it's wonderful."

"Not so very," Woods replied, avoiding her glance. "You see,

nearly all your father's guests have daughters of their own."

"I never realized before how disagreeable you could be."

"Meant that as a compliment," said the young man, as an afterthought. "You see, Jerry McCarter's daughter could not help boasting to the next-door neighbors about her father's coming up here and breaking into society. And the old man next door told some of his fellow-members of the Tammany Hall Club over the corner saloon that the McCarters were putting on lugs. It reached the city editor through one of our office boys, so here I am, you see." Woods took out a cigarette. "Nothing wonderful about that."

"Well, you won't find out anything more about it."

"Oh, yes, I will," he returned imperturbably, striking a match.

Frances came close to him and smiled tauntingly. "I know what it is," she said, and seemed to jeer at him.

"Oh, no, you don't. I know your father too well."

"You think because I'm a girl!" She seemed more vexed and charming, and she added haughtily, "Father appreciates me," with a significant emphasis upon the first word. But the reporter, smoking in silence, only smiled and shook his head, unconvinced.

"Just to show you I do know," she proceeded, piqued, "I'll tell you if you promise not to tell."

"Then for heaven's sake, don't!" cried the young man, jumping up and retreating from her.

"What do you mean?"

"The only reason I want to know is to tell," he said, turning to her. "I can't say I am particularly interested, personally, in what your father does with Tammany, or," he added significantly, "what Tammany does with your father." Then he smiled gravely, a little cynically and said, "The insatiable curiosity of the ubiquitous newspaper reporter," puffing his cigarette again. "We're about the only

people in the world who haven't any curiosity left."

That seemed interesting to her, but it was not apropos. "Don't you realize that my father is the hardest man to interview in the United States?" she asked.

Woods nodded calmly and took his seat again. "Everybody in my trade knows that, Miss Cunningham. Foiling interviewers, they say in Park Row, is his favorite recreation, when too busy for outdoor exercise."

"And that he hates all newspaper men?" the girl added to clinch her argument.

"So would I," laughed Woods, "if one of them had cost me the Presidential nomination."

"And the immaterial fact that he does not want you to know——"

"Makes it rather unpleasant all round, you see," said Woods whimsically, as he leaned back and smoked upward, perfectly at ease.

"But does not deter you?" She did not like it, but it fascinated her. It seemed so courageous to the daughter.

"When your father was counsel for the defense in the celebrated Townsend Trust case, did he hesitate to cross-examine unwilling witnesses? I reported that trial."

"Oh, but you see that was in the interest of his clients."

"This is in the interest of my clients, the public."

"But that was for—Justice."

"This is for News—another luxury of civilization which has become a necessity in modern times. Good deal cheaper than litigation."

"Suppose I asked you to write nothing about this affair," said the girl tentatively, a little appealingly.

Woods looked at her, then out toward the lake again and finally said weakly, "Suppose you don't."

"But suppose I did?" She liked his vibrant voice in this tone.

"I'm a reporter," said the man in a tone that showed he considered that the end of the argument.

It was. She paused and began another. "Why are you a reporter, Mr.

Woods? Why don't you leave newspaper work?"

"Why doesn't your father leave politics?"

"That's his life."

"This is mine."

"But some people, so many people, think newspaper writing unworthy of your talents."

"Some people think municipal politics unworthy of your father's. Not only that, Miss Cunningham, but some of us, a good many of us whose business it is to observe these things"—he abandoned the bantering tone now—"wonder how long it will be before he wishes he had never undertaken to reform a board of commissioners containing one of the wariest and wickedest reprobates on Manhattan Island."

"Oh, you needn't worry about father," she returned with the swagger which amused and charmed him. "Why, with his experience with international diplomats and all that, these ward politicians—pooh! mere child's play for him."

"Others have made the same mistake," said Woods with the characteristic cynicism of his trade. "Politics is not a game with those fellows. They don't play according to rules. It's business with them—for my own pocket all the time."

The girl smiled upon him condescendingly. "Do you know what he has done with them?" She stopped herself abruptly. "But I won't tell."

Woods suddenly pointed his finger at her. "Yes, you will," he exclaimed, so fiercely that she recoiled in alarm. He dropped his hand. "If you don't stop talking about it," he added and laughed. And then they both laughed together, which was rather pleasant while it lasted, and she began her second argument all over again.

"I am so glad your paper is sending you to London," she said with friendly interest.

The reporter asked why.

"Because we—" Again she stopped and added, laughing—"because it must be fine to be a foreign corre-

spondent. You sail on the *Cedric* on the seventh?"

Woods gazed at her a moment and then shook his head slowly. "'Fraid I can't go at all."

"Oh," she said, hiding her disappointment, "when did you find that out?"

"This evening."

"Why, what has interfered?"

"The very thing I was going over there to get away from," he replied, springing up and getting away from it. "Something which holds me in spite of myself." He turned toward the lake as if to remind himself of what he was here for.

Frances was young, but it does not require great age in a girl to suspect the meaning of speeches of that kind from a man. Nor was she too old to pretend otherwise. "There's only one thing that could interest you so much," she said skeptically, "and that's a piece of news—what you call a story."

The reporter said nothing, though everything, from the moon and the hills across the lake to the ancient Italian sun-dial, bearing the suggestive, if prosaic inscription "*Tempus Fugit*," prompted him to say much—including the girl herself, with her piquant face raised provokingly.

"Won't you tell me about it?" she asked lightly, telling herself that she was becoming more skeptical every minute.

"There are some stories even newspaper reporters do not feel at liberty to tell."

"Well, you needn't be so grandstandish about it," the girl replied. "I'm sure I don't care to hear about your old story."

Woods laughed and nodded. "I knew that. That's why I don't tell."

"Oh, you don't know anything of the sort."

Woods managed to look gravely interested.

"There it is again," she said, laughing at him. "That irritating, omniscient air. When you look that way I—I feel like screaming."

She ran up close to him and repeated in a louder, higher voice, "Screaming! Do you understand?"

The tall reporter, looking down on her, as though she were some curious type of native he had discovered in his rambles over the world, controlled himself and smiled indulgently.

"But you would only laugh at me," she said, looking up at him rather wistfully, as if aware of her immaturity and ignorance of the great world he knew so much about. "You would only laugh at me, wouldn't you?"

"You," he said, as if trying to convince himself, "why, you are only one of those soft, fluffy, fragrant little things called girls. Aren't you?"

"And you are only one of those great, hulking, smoky-smelling things called men," she returned defiantly. They stood thus a moment, looking at each other—the moon looking at both of them—the fluffy thing's chin elevated and eyes upturned; the hulking thing's mind teeming with many unutterable thoughts. "Aren't you?" she asked like a challenge.

"I think," said the man, still looking down into her eyes and speaking very slowly, "I think I'd better go down to the boathouse to wait for your father." But he did not move. "Don't you?"

"He's coming back this way."

"It might be too late."

"Too late?"

"For the story."

He allowed himself to look an instant longer, then tore himself abruptly away without another word.

"Oh, I believe you're afraid I'll find out *your* story," she jeered.

"Nonsense," he said, but did not turn.

"Oh, but I'm very good at getting things out of people," she called after him.

"You!" he shouted back. "You're nothing but a little fluffy thing."

"Well, I can't help that," she sighed, not meaning him to hear. He did not hear the words, but the night was so still that the note of it reached him, stabbed him, stopped him, and he

turned and looked. She stood alone in the moonlight, and was doubtless hurt. He rushed back to her, distracted.

"I am so sorry. I beg your pardon," he said, and turned quickly away again, Frances following.

"The moonlight is perfectly stunning on the lake by this time," she said casually.

"Are you coming, too?" he asked, not very enthusiastically, it seemed.

She drew back. "Don't you want me?"

"Do I want you!" he cried, with a throb of feeling which he straightway strangled. "Yes," he said gravely. "I should think it would be very nice in you to come, if you care to, Miss Cunningham."

With chin elevated, Miss Cunningham turned abruptly toward the terrace, Mr. Woods following blindly.

"Ah, don't run away from me," he cried, running to catch up with her. "Come! Do come with me. Won't you come? Ah, do!"

"That's better," thought the girl as he overtook her. And then, as they turned toward the allée leading to the lake, she looked up at him. "Do you know, I think it's very nice of you to let me tag along," she said, as if she meant it—maybe she did; "why is it you never let me know you—the real you?"

He stopped abruptly. "It's what I try to forget when I'm with you," he burst out impulsively, "and never can," he added, with a laugh which was not very tragic. "You are the one person in the world who makes me self-conscious."

"That isn't very nice," said the girl. She was inclined to go on; he to stop as though not quite sure whether he wanted her to tag along after all.

"If you knew my real self, as you call it," he began, with the conscious laugh again, and ended there.

"I hate confessions," she said. "They're so juvenile."

But he had no intention of "confessing" anything. It would have been an impertinence to her, even if

it had not been an impossibility to him. For he was, indeed, long past the age for that sort of thing. Yet it seemed somehow unfair to revel in the trust and belief of one like this, and it disturbed him. If it had been any other girl it might not have mattered. It never *had* mattered, unfortunately, and that was one of the disturbing considerations. But this girl—it was different. She stood for all the sunny sweetness and goodness, all the grace and beauty and charm left out of life as seen from the point of view of news.

He was silent, perhaps hurt. She was sorry.

"Have you had a 'fearful past'?" she asked lightly, her head on one side. "Do tell me all about it," she added enthusiastically. They had not left the garden, and she sat down upon a bench, expectantly.

He sat down beside her, but made some diverting reply facetiously.

Since little more than a wondering-eyed boy, a poet perhaps, by nature, in any case when far too young to assimilate a quarter of the off-scouring scraps of reality that were crammed into his highly-sensitized consciousness, he had been hunting and handling this stuff called "News": the horrible, the astonishing, the abnormal happenings of the busy world, for the public to devour with breakfast and to curse young reporters for writing. He had had very little to do with even the plain, wholesome worthiness of existence. For why should men in his profession stop to consider the ninety-nine happy couples who do not appear in the divorce courts, the ninety-nine honest Sunday-school superintendents who do not wreck banks? Such are not news, just as healthy humanity is not the stuff on which physicians form their peculiar judgments of mankind with such complacent superiority to ignorant lay minds. A dull record of monotonous virtue would be a drug on the market even at a penny a copy.

"Why don't you talk to me?" asked the girl. She did not want him to make love to her, but she did not want him not to want to.

He said that it was remarkable to be able to sit out of doors so late in the season, and joined in the peal of girlish laughter which followed. Then he thought to inquire whether it were not too cool, however, for her, with such a filmy scarf over her shoulders.

"We can go inside if you prefer," she said, chin up again.

He shook his head and talked about the stunningness of the moonlight on the lake and asked her questions about her horses. Clearly he was bored, she thought, and began to think she was, too. He knew so many clever women at home and abroad. She concluded that she must be to him a stupid little fluffy thing.

As if mere cleverness were the quality to charm a man who possessed that himself, who dealt in cleverness, sickened of it as everyone does of the smell of one's shop.

Superficial cleverness and the deep disquieting truths beneath its smirking surface had been his daily life, his mental food from year in to year out, with very little time for regular rest and recreation until the paper went to press. And what was there to do then? Every sort of man must have recreation; his sort, something robust after the nervous strain of writing. In the hours following midnight in a city, when the theatres are dark and most of the busy town has gone to bed, there is not a great variety of diversion to choose from. He had chosen about all there was and had enjoyed it until recently. His choice was not deliberate, but it filled an organic want to float up and away from haunting reality which haunted him less while lost in his work than when relaxed and reflective. Thus, seeing both in his work and in his play, so much of the wrong side of life, it was no wonder that, long ago, when still in what should have been the idealizing period of youth, he began to think that the wrong side was the right side, the prevailing side. He saw little that was worthy of his respect, so few things to believe in, that he lost the knack of believing and respecting even

when he saw it. So many things had proved evil or ridiculous, why not all the rest? Then one day this slip of a girl dawned. And, oh, the difference!

She believed in everybody—even in him—and that had made him want to do so, too. It was a new aspiration, and he liked the feel of it.

He turned and looked at her, his lowering eyebrows casting greater shadows over his deep-set, steady-burning eyes. He seemed to be scowling at her, so she scowled back at him and said "Booh," which made him laugh with the sheer joy of being near her.

She shook her head at him. "Ho! I'm not afraid of you," she said, and audaciously added, "Billy," looking up at him as he started and tingled. "Is that terribly fresh of me?" she asked, a little frightened, "to an author!"

Woods was smiling dreamily. "I always thought it a commonplace name," he said. "Now I don't."

"That's very well done," smiled the girl. "You ought to keep it for your new book."

She arose to go. It had not been such a long delay as it seemed. He had done much thinking. "Got it all thought out now?" she asked, as if he had stopped to shake a pebble from his shoe. "Can we go on without any more self-conscious business? I hate it."

"Everything you do and say only makes me more conscious of what I owe to you!" burst from him. "If I could only repay it!" There was a pause. "I expect no such luck," he added, smiling.

The notion of her being of benefit to a man like him was almost too absurd to take seriously, she being still too young to understand that it is what they are and not what they do that makes women potent. But he seemed dreadfully serious and so she replied, "Well, you only make me conscious that I'm only a great big humbug."

He broke loose now. It came out fast. They forgot the lake.

"Maybe you are a humbug, but

you've restored my belief in the goodness of good things, my respect for things respectable, and so—my debt remains. At all hours of the day, down there in the dark vortex of the city, I can picture you to myself, moving about here and there, doing the delightful commonplace things of life, calling, shopping, walking, driving, all the sweet normality of living."

She considered it a stupid picture, unworthy of the sweet tones of his low, vibrant voice, but seemed willing to listen.

"Now she's making her father's tea," I say to myself. "Now she's talking to those lucky little devils at the East Side Settlement." And sometimes the longing just to see you, even from a distance, comes so fiercely that—well, that's the reason I was at Washington, and why I appeared in that country lane while you were at the house-party on the Hudson. One look at your face—perhaps a touch of your hand—and 'Yes, it is all true,' I say to myself, and then go back to handling news again, believing once more, though not knowing just how, that there is some kind of intelligence and goodness at the head of this universe, that human nature can't be so bad, that there is a God in His heaven and all's well with the world."

Mrs. Metcalfe, thinking that they had been together long enough, and fearing lest it might prove too long, came upon them in time to hear a reporter paraphrasing Browning. "Frances," she called, "I'm afraid it is becoming too cool for you."

"Not at all cool," said the girl.

"Good heavens! I forgot. I'm here for news," said the reporter, once more turning off toward the lake.

Frances called up to her aunt, "I'm going to walk down to the lake with—Billy," quite as if she used his name without deliberation.

"You still want to come with me!" he whispered eagerly.

"Maybe I know your real self now better than you do."

"Frances," called Mrs. Metcalfe.

There are limits to an aunt's authority. In such cases diplomacy must be employed. "You should wear a heavier wrap, dear."

The reporter, starting back for it, was blocked by the aunt who stated that Frances alone could find it. "I believe you write for the newspapers," said Mrs. Metcalfe, not unpleasantly, as Frances disappeared. "I have a piece of news for you."

Woods, amused, bowed gallantly. "You are most kind," he said.

The man had a way with him, Mrs. Metcalfe noted, but was unconscious of any intended sarcasm. "Miss Cunningham is engaged to your cousin Gilbert," she said, getting his face in the light as much as possible.

"I have heard a rumor to that effect," said Woods. "It is true then?" The man had a presence, too, she admitted grudgingly.

"At least she soon will be," the lady added, smiling. "But don't put it in the paper till I ask you to."

The young man said he was honored with her confidence.

"Do not forget," Mrs. Metcalfe called after him significantly, as he started off with her niece.

"I am only here for news—news I can put in the paper," he called back laughingly, as he disappeared under the trees with Frances.

IV

UNKNOWN to Woods, three other newspaper men had come up on a later train and were entering the estate on one side as he was descending the other with Frances. This would spoil his "beat" provided that the news was obtained at all.

But that was hardly the way Mrs. Metcalfe regarded the matter. She looked upon them simply as a nuisance. But she had been associated with public life long enough to know that they were a necessary nuisance, and received them with the smiling courtesy of those who are accustomed to the importance of being at the source of

news. Even the shabbiest reporters note the difference in attitude, and perhaps smile in their baggy sleeves at the display various men and women make of familiar human traits.

She told them that it would do no good to wait, but made them free to do so if they preferred. They explained that they could not leave until the return train at any rate, and expressed a desire to wait in the garden where they might smoke, since it was an unusually warm night for late October. Mrs. Metcalfe not only gave this permission, but sent a footman out with some of the general's excellent cigars.

"The boat landing is out this way some place," said Holbein, the oldest of the three, middle-aged, whiskered and spectacled, a hard worker, a reliable political reporter.

"You mean, catch him on the way back?" asked one of the other two, a well-bred youngster, with a responsive, intellectual face and a few still cherished ideals about the sacred opportunities of his recently-adopted "calling," which he was inclined to term "Journalism."

"Exactly," said the older man impatiently, "if there's time." And he looked at his watch, wearily. He had hoped to spend this night under his own roof in Brooklyn, but one could never tell, in his profession, when donning one's clothes in the morning, just where he might be when it came time to undress.

"Time enough, I guess, for all we'll get out of old man Cunningham." This in a loud, lazy voice from Stump, the last member of the trio to come down the steps—a boozy, shabby one, who might be either young or old, in the frayed frock coat he wore at all hours of the day and night.

"My paper," said the youngster, somewhat amused with his mission, "wants a humorous story—a lot of color about Jerry McCarter sticking his napkin under his chin, and that sort of thing."

"You can fake all that," said the boozy one, sitting down luxuriously

and elevating his feet to the green tub of a bay tree. "But the real reason for this soirée—" He shook his head and puffed appreciatively on one of the general's cigars to show he did not propose to be broken-hearted about it.

"A burnt child dreads the fire," remarked the authoritative whiskered man. "If it hadn't been for a newspaper man, General Cunningham might be sitting in the White House today."

"Say," put in Stump, more fond of gossip than of work, "did I tell you I saw the man who faked that same famous interview on the Trust question—on the train, coming up? What became of him?"

"That man Lascalles?" asked the cub reporter. His tone showed the interest called forth by a character well known in his profession, and the contempt for a person who had proved a disgrace to it.

Holbein, the dean of the group, shook his head wisely. "Harry Lascalles wouldn't dare show his face here."

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Lascalles, coming out of the door. He was a big, florid man with an oily black mustache and an oily manner, but very keen black eyes which, when he talked, shifted continuously from one to the other of those of the persons addressed. Great things had been predicted of him once and some of them had been fulfilled, but his chief celebrity was in fields not predicted, and he was now a worse wreck, morally, than the boozy member of the group he was now approaching. He had begun life as an artist in Paris, became an illustrator for one of the lesser known of the many Parisian periodicals of frank utterance and un-Puritanical pictures. Later he did some of the frank writing; not wisely but too well, according to his own story—according to some of the Paris correspondents it was a case of holding out for too high a price from the young gentleman of title he attacked. This, the deadliest charge that can be made against a newspaper man, was never proved, merely hinted at vaguely.

Whatever had been his indiscretion he did not live in America of his own preference, judging from his freely expressed opinions of everything in it from art and women to cigarettes and writing paper.

Lascalles was followed by another, a harmless young man named Munson, who had nice eyes and a weak mouth.

"We were just saying," remarked Holbein, pleasantly enough, nodding coldly, like the others, "that we didn't think you'd care to show your face here to Secretary Cunningham."

"I don't," returned Lascalles, with a shrug which showed where he got it. "Hence my understudy. Do you fellows know Munson?" The smile which accompanied the introduction would have been unpleasant even without such jagged teeth. The others nodded at young Munson. "Another innocent victim," thought steady old Holbein, "to be corrupted down there in their fake foundry."

"Where are the rest?" asked Lascalles, looking about.

"Ours seem to be the only papers to get the tip," Holbein replied, "though somebody had already fixed the operator at the junction."

Lascalles continued to look about him, sniffing contemptuously at the self-conscious newness of American formal gardens. "I thought Billy Woods might be 'among those present.'"

Of late it had been noticed on Park Row that Lascalles had been making assiduous efforts to renew an old friendship with Billy Woods which had lapsed in recent years. "Understand your office has been trying once more to inveigle Billy into joining your staff," remarked Holbein to Lascalles.

"Woods," replied Lascalles, "is a fool. We offered him a guarantee bigger than the salary of most managing editors."

"And he told you," laughed Stump, "to give your people his compliments and there wasn't enough money in New York to make him take assignments from them."

Lascalles joined in the laughter which followed, but added, "Oh, give him time. Give him time. I once had that pose myself, when I was on the same staff with Billy." He pronounced it "Bee-lee," though for the most part he spoke Manhattanese.

"I always understood," put in the cub inquiringly, "that the real reason Woods never took any offers to go to any other paper was because it would involve overhauling the drawers of his desk."

The others smiled reflectively. There were many stories about Woods along Park Row.

"All the same, he may have to," said the authoritative Holbein, "if he doesn't take a brace."

"Booze again?" inquired Stump, with more interest than he had previously manifested. It was from a fellow feeling.

"No. That's the odd thing about it," answered Holbein. "Cut whisky out entirely. But his absent-mindedness—been growing on him lately. The boys tell me that he has a way of disappearing for days at a time, nobody knows where; then turns up at the office again as if nothing had happened; takes off his coat, sits down at his desk and waits for his assignment, knowing perfectly well that he'll get the story of the day."

"Remember that time they sent him to cover that big boiler explosion down the Bay? Billy didn't show up for a week. Meanwhile a good murder in the Bronx and the report of the Superintendent of Insurance had come out and everybody had forgotten all about the boiler explosion. But Woods stalked up to the desk, looking intense and important, and said solemnly, 'Ten men killed in that boiler explosion, Mr. Stone.'"

"Yes. They told him then, that if he took another self-assigned vacation, he could keep it."

"That was two years ago and—he's still there, I notice."

"But that was two years nearer his first offense."

"Remember that time they sent him

down to the Cunard Line docks to get an interview with Secretary Cunningham about the chances of war? Billy simply waited around until the other boys all fell down as usual, then quietly sauntered over and made the old fox open up somehow, just before the steamer started, and got the Secretary and himself so interested that he was gliding down the Bay before he knew it."

"Yes, but he got off with the pilot, signaled to a passing tug and got his story in just when they were beginning to give him up. It scooped the whole country and all the foreign correspondents cabled quotations from it."

"His absent-mindedness is not working just that way nowadays," said Holbein. "Last week they handed him out an ultimatum."

The others were of the opinion that this was the usual bluff. "There is only one Billy Woods," said the boozy Stump, "and only one Eugene Stump, but plenty of newspapers that want us geniuses—so we're safe as long as we are on deck till the paper goes to press." Stump had never remained for three successive months on one staff in all his turbulent newspaper career.

"I got that straight from their managing editor," said Holbein earnestly. "They don't propose to put up with it, even from Woods. Plays the devil with the morale of the staff and all that."

The voices of the general's launch party were heard coming up the allée, still voluble but not so boisterous. The young reporter jumped up eagerly. The others arose with more or less interest. Lascalles kept out of sight in the shrubbery.

It appeared that the launch had broken down. "Ah, home at last," the general was saying. "Have you all survived the long walk?" he inquired solicitously.

"Oh, that's all right, general," replied Shayne. "Accidents will happen."

"Gillie, old chap," Jerry McCarter had his arm on the shoulder of young Townsend, "between you and I, the walk was what we were needin'."

"That type of motor boat—always breaking down," said Gilbert, half to himself. "I warned the general against that sort. But he never takes my advice." Gilbert took a final look at the strange company and fled, with a feeling of relief, into the house to find Frances.

Meanwhile the reporters, with the exception of Lascalles who had remained in the shadow of the shrubbery, had made an advance upon the general in good order, and had been repulsed—but not yet routed.

"Not one word, gentlemen," his voice rose above the others.

"But at least," temporized Holbein, "may we not take the liberty of inquiring—?"

"Not one word," repeated the old gentleman, smiling good-naturedly, and straightway began to talk copiously about the prospects of the political situation in New York and the possibility of reconciling the two factions—views that would make interesting reading if expressed by him some months hence, but hardly worth a line today.

The young reporter, keen for humor, had approached Jerry McCarter and some of the other Tammanyites, but he was too young at the business to know how to make them open their mouths, and so they only shook their heads and referred him back to the general, who had exacted their promise to say nothing.

Two members of the party, Shayne and Nordheimer, with the pretext of escaping the reporters, separated themselves from the general and the others on the terrace, and stepped down into the garden strolling lazily until well out of sight. Then they began to talk eagerly, for it was the first chance they had found since the important events of the afternoon.

"We've got to look out for the damned newspapers," said Nordheimer heavily.

"It's such a little thing," said Shayne. "They'll never discover it." He took a document out of his pocket and unfolded it as if to point out a

passage, by the light of the Chinese lanterns.

"What makes you think the general won't miss it?" asked Nordheimer nervously.

"Bah! The old man is no proof-reader," replied Shayne.

"Look out!" whispered Nordheimer. "There's another of them." Lascales was also strolling in the garden.

"Yes," said Shayne, in a little louder tone as he quietly pocketed the document again, "our venerable leader is quite right in this matter. The newspapers should not be allowed to make a premature announcement." On the terrace the general was saying, "All to be made public in due season, gentlemen," and smiling good-temperedly.

Shayne and Nordheimer, carelessly arising, sauntered along the path as if to take a view of the moonlight from the pergola. Lascales, pretending to be oblivious, watched their movements with interest. Clearly something was doing at Fernleigh.

"Sure this is the final version of the bill?" asked Nordheimer in a more careful tone as soon as they were safely out of earshot.

"The general's secretary just finished copying it from the original draft in the old man's handwriting."

"And all we've got to do then, is to get rid of this comma?"

"Simply leave it out of the printed copy of the bill to be presented at Albany"—Shayne nodded—"and then—well, you see the power that section puts in our hands."

"It makes no difference in the sense as you read it," said Nordheimer.

"That's the beauty of it," returned Shayne. "Nobody will miss it. But, think of the difference in the legal significance! By the aid of the perfectly legitimate provisions of the old statute we'll be able—Now what's that fellow coming over this way for?" Lascales had tried to make a sortie, but was seen as he crossed the moonlight, and heard nothing at all. His sharp eyes detected from their manner that he was discovered,

so he straightway made as if he had not observed them.

"I know that man," said Nordheimer. "Look out for him."

In order to avoid suspicion, they turned their footsteps back toward the rest of the party, where the general was still parrying and thrusting against four at once, to his amusement and their frankly expressed admiration.

"Say," whispered Nordheimer, with a heavy-jowled grin, "everybody'll think the old man's mixed up in this, sure. He wrote the bill."

"Good enough for him," commented Shayne half-aloud. "Went into Tammany to reform it, and got reformed himself, as usual, eh? Here comes that damned Lascales again. Pretend we don't see him, and throw a bluff." So they began to talk with interest and amusement of what a poor figure the reporters were cutting with the general. "He's old, but he knows a thing or two," said Shayne.

"That's right. You can't fool him," chuckled Nordheimer.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" Shayne turned to Lascales as if discovering him for the first time.

"Light," requested Lascales, not unconscious of the symbolism. Shayne handed him his cigar. Lascales lighted his cigarette, returned thanks unctuously, remarked on the beauty of the evening and passed by.

"Think he's on?" asked Nordheimer.

"Got his eyes open, but he hasn't seen anything yet. Don't worry. We can fix him." Shayne suddenly stopped in his tracks, touched Nordheimer's arm and pointed. "Here's the man who sent Mike to Sing Sing," he remarked.

Nordheimer turned nervously. There in the bright moonlight, approaching with a girl in white, was the well-known, sometimes feared, Billy Woods.

V

TOWNSEND, unable to find Frances in the house, had strolled out upon the

terrace with Mrs. Metcalfe. "Here she comes now," said the latter, pointing to the same pair Shayne had observed approaching.

"One of them seems to be interviewing her," remarked Gilbert, facetiously raising his eyebrows.

"Your cousin," said Mrs. Metcalfe.

Gilbert's eyebrows went down abruptly. "Only a distant cousin, Mrs. Metcalfe."

"But on the side from which you get your wit, my dear Gilbert, and your charming manners."

"May I ask what you mean by that?"

"Haven't you wit enough to see the charm of a certain manner?"

"Dear me!" said Gilbert. "Frances has wit enough to see through it."

"She is very young." Mrs. Metcalfe gently pushed him forward, shaking her head thoughtfully as she watched him saunter slowly down the steps to meet the pair approaching.

Even by the light of the moon—or because of it—Woods seemed to be gazing adoringly at the girl as they came along with slow, sentimental steps, framed by the dark trees on either hand. If they had been nearer Townsend might have observed that the girl looked piqued. Lascalles was near and he observed this.

"I hope you enjoyed the moon," said Frances whimsically, without looking at him.

"Beautiful! Beautiful!" said the man without removing his gaze from her face.

"But you never once looked at it."

"I knew it was up there, though," he said, nodding convincingly.

"And, accordingly, you kept your mind down here—on business." She gave him a look with this.

His face showed a struggle—to keep it down. "That's all I'm here for, you know," he said quietly.

"I should think I did!" she replied drily. "You don't believe in letting anything interfere with business, do you?"

"Depends on circumstances," he replied; and at the same moment spying

her father surrounded by reporters he instantly took in the whole situation. And with this, his manner changed from that of a sentimental lover to that of a quick-thinking man with something to do in a very short time. "How did they pass us? Must have come by the valley road." He was talking with great rapidity. "McCarter, Munger, Murphy, but where—Ah, see that!" He pointed out Shayne and Nordheimer to the girl. "Heads together, as usual. That pair will bear watching—close watching, Miss Cunningham."

The girl did not like it, but she was interested. Gilbert had joined them. Woods did not notice it. Gilbert ignored his cousin, but he did not notice even that.

"Holbein, poor old Stump—they aren't making much headway," he went on. "Your father's favorite recreation, Miss Cunningham." And taking out his watch, he stepped across the intervening space to join the group on the lower terrace, muttering to himself, "No telephone in reach; nearest telegraph office fourteen miles down the line and the train leaves in less than an hour. Whew! Looks doubtful."

Frances watched him over Gilbert's shoulder as the latter eagerly led her away; perhaps too eagerly, for she made him stop, saying that she wanted to look on and see the fun.

Gilbert wishing to humor her, said with an amused, superior air and condescending interest, "I always supposed they carried notebooks. Didn't you?" Gilbert did not like his unregenerate cousin's manner, misunderstood his absorption, and considered it an intended snub. This was impudent, to say the least, in the light of all Gilbert had done, or had been willing to do, for him. There was a time, to be sure, when Cousin William was simply impossible, but Gilbert had not intended to cherish animosity. In fact, he had once suggested getting him employment in a good, conservative Wall street firm—and William only laughed at the idea, which did not

make the relations less strained. Nevertheless, when the harum-scarum cousin returned from the war, Gilbert had arranged a dinner in his honor, and the war correspondent seemed pleased to accept. But a good many things of this sort were being given for him at the time, at home and in England, and he was just then so absorbed in a newspaper controversy with a tactical expert that he "clean forgot all about it," as he explained afterward in a penitent note—not a very flattering explanation, nor one likely to help the cause of reestablishing the cousinly relationship.

Since then Gilbert had naturally not enjoyed it, when people asked with interest, "Oh, are you a cousin of W. P. Woods, the war correspondent?" Moreover, a certain busybody had repeated Billy's reply when someone asked if it were true that Gilbert were his cousin: "Yes, but I can't help that."

In short, Gilbert disapproved him, forgave him, despised him, feared him, and Cousin William seemed only oblivious.

Meanwhile, the absorbed cousin, wishing to avoid the appearance of haste, which sometimes proved fatal, had slackened his pace as he drew near the group on the terrace. They had not yet observed him.

Now, those who used to say that Woods made men talk because of his cleverness, would have thought that he was studying the old gentleman, to determine how to approach him. Perhaps he was, but he did not do so consciously. He never planned beforehand what to say or how to say it. It was not done with his head at all, but with his sympathy, his temperament, a sort of automatic adjustment to the requirements of another's personality, as influenced by the mood of the moment.

The general, tired out with the various episodes of the evening, was finding his favorite recreation a burden. "No, gentlemen," he was saying, raising his hand in exasperation as he began to retreat toward the door.

"I have nothing to say about that—I must ask you to excuse me for tonight."

"That's final enough, fellows," remarked Woods, coming up the steps behind them; "he doesn't care to talk. Can't you see?" The others turned in surprise. "Good night, general. Come on, boys." He made as if to go and then added, perhaps as an afterthought, to the general, "It's unfortunate, from your point of view, sir," smiling quizzically as he spoke, "that you cannot spike the editorial guns as effectively as you have the news department. Good night." He bowed with the deference due the general's years and attainments.

"Eh? What are the editorial writers going to say?" asked the general, dropping the hand he had held out to say good night.

"I don't know, sir," said Woods frankly. "We gather the news—they comment on it. But of course, a man of your experience can see"—the reporter lowered his voice—"that they aren't going to let a thing like this go by without having a little fun with it." He smiled, shrugged his shoulders and glanced over toward McCarter and the others who had joined Shayne. This was perfectly true; the editorial writers would undoubtedly say something. It was their business to do so. The general had not thought of that. It was to his advantage to know it, although he did not see it at once.

The general had winced and now said rather hotly, "I fail to see why the newspapers should feel called upon to comment upon a private gathering in my own house." Which made Gilbert clap his hands softly and say, "Hear! hear!" nodding at Frances.

"I think we all appreciate your feelings in the matter, general," said Woods respectfully, "but unfortunately the public doesn't look at it in just that way. The goings-in and comings-out of public men are matters of public interest. They think you belong to them, you know." This was followed by a pause, during

which Gilbert said to Frances, "Rather impertinent, I think."

"I should much prefer," replied the former secretary, in a tone of friendly confidence to Woods, "I should greatly prefer no conjecturing whatever as to the object of this little party."

"We could telegraph a request to that effect," said Woods hesitatingly.

"Could you manage it?" asked the general earnestly. The others seemed surprised. Woods seemed about to go.

"That's a trap," whispered Gilbert to Frances. "You'll see."

"Then the editorials—supposing they took our suggestion—would merely say," Woods replied truthfully, "without any comment whatever: 'General Cunningham is entertaining for the week-end at Fernleigh, his country-seat in the Berkshires, Jim Nordheimer, Jake Shayne, Jerry McCarter, *et al.*'—and let the public make its own comments."

The general interrupted with a sign of annoyance. He saw the point now. So did the other reporters, who were smiling at one another. Woods did not smile; it seemed to him rather pathetic that an enlightened leader of civilization should be so medieval in his attitude toward the proper function of publicity. It was irritating to see how charlatans understood the art of it, while men of this sort fought it instead of employing it to help their purposes. Of course, Woods looked at the matter from the point of view of an agent of publicity, but he was sincere in believing that a desire for unnecessary secrecy, for exclusiveness, had hindered the old gentleman more than once in his long career, in which he had won many of the prizes of life, but still considered himself in his ripe old age a failure. The figure he presented, playing at being one of the people, would have been entertaining if it were not so grotesque. In the eyes of a man like Woods, who classified all men as either fools or knaves, the general was forced into the former category.

"What did I tell you!" Gilbert was

whispering to Frances. "A reporter's trick!"

"One moment, Mr. Woods," said the general, in his old-fashioned manner. "Could you not keep all mention of this matter out of the papers? Come now. I would deem it——"

"That is beyond our power," interrupted Woods, who saw there was barely time now to get and to telegraph a statement. "News is news. We've received our orders and we have to obey them, just as you did in the army." The general was thinking. Woods snapped his watch. "They are waiting to hear from us, sir." The general was hesitating. "Very well, sir; you know best. Boys, we may as well start on." And again he made as if to go.

The general was hurriedly whispering to certain of his Tammany colleagues. "Inasmuch as they would publish something in any case——"

"But, general——" began Shayne.

"Otherwise our attempt at secrecy might be misconstrued."

"Hardly that," put in Nordheimer.

"They know you too well, sir," said Jake Shayne.

The general turned abruptly and called to the departing reporters kindly to step into the library. The old gentleman now called them representatives of the press. They did not care what they were called as long as they got the story.

Young Townsend, with a manner of some importance, now stepped up to the general as the latter was leading the way into the house with Woods: "If you will take my advice——"

"Probably he will, when he asks it," Woods remarked; and stepping between them, took the general's arm, saying, with a wink to the other reporters, "Come on, 'representatives.'" And they all filed into the house, sharpening pencils or searching their pockets for copy paper or the backs of letters with which to aid their memory in telegraphing the story to the city offices. There would hardly be time after they reached the junction to get in more than two or three para-

graphs, but a "big story" is not necessarily a long one.

VI

YOUNG Munson, the reporter who had accompanied Lascalles, was about to join them, but saw his colleague signaling to him from the garden below, and waited obediently.

"But it's a big story," Munson protested.

"I've got a bigger one!" Lascalles related what he had overheard.

"What do you make out of it?" asked the boy, flattered at being consulted. He was not being consulted.

"But I tell you that's all I could hear: 'Look out for the damned newspapers,' says Nordheimer. And Shayne replies: 'It's such a little thing, they'll never discover it.' And also: 'The old man's no proof-reader.' Then they got onto me and wouldn't let me within a mile of them."

"But you think it's graft?"

"Think! What are they here for?"

"Right under the old man's nose! What is their game?"

"That's for us to find out."

"Hardest thing we ever tackled," said Munson, feeling the importance of it.

"But, if we land it!" exclaimed Lascalles, looking forward to practical results.

"The biggest exclusive story published this year," exclaimed the youngster enthusiastically.

With a change of tone, Lascalles remarked, his arm on the other's shoulder: "Some stories, my boy, are too big—to be published."

Munson had often heard of the many great inside stories such as every newspaper office knows but cannot or will not publish for reasons of State or for other reasons, sometimes from sheer kindness, which would sound surprising to the public. None of these reasons seemed to apply in this case. He sought elucidation.

"Too valuable," said Lascalles laconically.

"How do you mean?"

Lascalles smiled at his ignorance. "Sell that story to the city editor for twenty or fifty dollars at the most!" He patted the boy's arm. "I would call it better business to let Jake Shayne buy it."

"I would call that blackmail," said Munson, recoiling.

"Not when it's worth twenty or fifty thousand dollars, my boy."

"Say, Lascalles," said Munson, turning away from the other's basilisk eyes. "I've done some queer things, and our sheet may be sensational and all that, but—we're honest, anyway."

"Where does the dishonesty come in?" asked Lascalles. "They want the money and they're bound to get it out of that big fool city down there—if not this way, some other way. They always do. Who can prevent it? We? We can't prevent it. We might as well have a slice of it."

"Why do you invite me into the deal?" asked Munson unexpectedly.

"Simply because I couldn't work it alone," replied Lascalles, grinning frankly.

"You're talking as if we had the whole grafting story pat," said Munson. "We haven't any real evidence yet."

"May be able to get some, now that your eyes are open," returned Lascalles. "Run along and see what the general's giving out." For this was why Munson had been consulted.

Munson ran, as he was told, in a way to make Lascalles, watching him, believe that he could be persuaded. In fact, Lascalles believed that anybody could, if the price was high enough. And, feeling secure about this merely incidental obstacle, he paced the garden, puzzling over the meaning of what he had heard, which he considered valuable only as a clue to the discovery of facts far more valuable. He knew a great deal about Shayne and Nordheimer, as he did about all of the well-known men in the despised city of his exile. He knew that Shayne, who had so many other more "legitimate" sources of

graft, would be one of the last to go into a game of this sort unless the stakes were large enough to make it worth while. Therefore Lascalles's probable "commission" would be undoubtedly enough to make it worth his while. He was thoroughly tired of the newspaper life, considered it beneath his talents and thought he saw a chance here to retire to the boulevards and the life he loved in the only civilized city. The thing that had kept him away so long had blown over by this time. Here was his great chance.

Gilbert and Frances, when the "fun" was over with the reporters, had strolled off to the lake to look up at the stars. At least Gilbert had gone for that worthy purpose; Frances went to see what would happen, and also because she could not help being a little sorry for him when the reporters passed by so jeeringly on their way into the house. Gilbert was a peculiar fellow, but he was fine-grained and sensitive, and she knew how ridicule hurt him, for all his pretense at being superior to the vulgar intrusions of the "sordid world."

He appreciated the delicacy of her wordless sympathy—he admired the potential subtlety of the maturing girl—and declared, in the moonlight, that with her it was easy to forget anything—"Two soul sides," he breathed softly, "one to face the world with—one to show a woman when he loves her."

"I seem to be having a run on Browning this evening," she said to herself.

"I beg your pardon—what did you say?" he asked.

"Nothing that you would like, I fear," she laughed. "Did I interrupt you? Do go on."

Gilbert went on, all the way to the lake and back, chiefly about his soul. Also about hers. Down there (under the stars) he called her "soul of my soul." It was not altogether an uninteresting way of doing it, but there was too much of it. So it fell out that on the way back he sighed and said:

"After all, how lonely is each one's soul."

"'Fraid I'm not the soulful sort," Frances made answer.

"Why have you changed toward me?" the lover asked pleadingly.

"All that you say about the inner life is beautiful, Gilbert, and about living for others, noble. But I like men to do things."

At this, Gilbert drew himself up, not boastfully, but with an injured air. "I am a member of the Committee on Art and Literature at the Club. I am a vestryman of the church, secretary of the Good Government Club, Number Seven, founder and president of the Townsend Free Ice Guild, a life member of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, director of the United Charities Association; will soon be made a trustee of the hospital—they always have a representative of our family——"

Frances interrupted. "That's it, your family—your money. Gilbert, did you ever win anything by your own efforts?"

Gilbert was even more amused than he was disappointed in her. "Surely you would not want me to go down to Wall street and 'hustle' with the vulgar mob—make more money—the absurd American type of man!"

"Maybe I'm an absurd American type of girl," she exclaimed. "Oh, I don't care whether they make money or not. But I like men to be men, to dash into the thick of things, not to look on from the grandstand—to try for something with all that's in them, forget everything else—fight for it. That's what men are for. Oh, I wish I were a man! I'd show you! What have you ever done? Why, you—you're a mere millionaire!"

"I have loved you all my life. That's about all," he said quietly. And then added, with a sudden force that frightened her, "And I will fight to get you." There was good stuff in him when he let it loose.

Frances liked this and consequently laughed at him. "Gilbert," she said, not unkindly, "all your life you've

had whatever you wanted—and with no greater effort than signing a cheque. Fortunately, you wanted innocent things. The gentle tastes you inherited from your mother are to be thanked for that—not your strong character, as you think. What have you ever done to make any fiber in you? But some day you too, your real character, will have its test. Some day you'll want something you can't have—want it so absorbingly, so tremendously that you will forget yourself and your subtleties—drop your attitudes and your self-consciousness, then your true nature will loom up!"

"That day has arrived," he cried, with a quick step toward her. "I want you as I never wanted anything before! I don't care what you say about me. It only makes me want you more. You—why, you are a woman; I thought you were only a girl. I want you. Not, as I told you, to help me live for others, but because I cannot live without you. I love you, Frank, and I will win you."

The girl, recoiling, part in fear and part in admiration, said: "Now you look like the Sargent portrait of your father."

"And you look at me as you used to look at me when I came home from college." He advanced to take her. She slipped away from him. "I am your mate and your master," he cried. "You know it."

"Wait till I come home from Europe," she said.

"I'm going abroad with you!" he exclaimed.

"No!"

"Yes."

They stood, looking at each other. There was a compelling note in Gilbert's voice which affected her. She seemed about to melt, but suddenly started and stiffened at hearing the voice of the other approaching, speaking briskly with the ring of an alert man successfully busy.

"A magnificent project, general," Woods was saying. "And I think you can be assured of the coöperation of all the newspapers—even mine."

Gilbert, lowering his voice to a whisper, said, "Yes?"

The answer was a sighing "No."

Gilbert caught his breath and turning saw that her eyes were fixed on his cousin, the reporter, who, with the general and the rest of those who had been in the library, now came down the steps again, evidently intending to take his short cut to the station.

VII

FRANCES, as she passed by to enter the house, slackened her steps. She would not see the man she had called "Billy" again before she sailed, and this thought had the better of her pride. "Aren't you going to say good-bye to me?" She asked it jocularly, but with a note of wistfulness. "I may not see you again before—"

"Oh," he said, bowing reverently, but interrupting her all the same. "Good night, Miss Cunningham, good night." Then, knowing that there was not a moment to lose, he unwillingly wrenched himself away without even waiting for her to explain that she was bidding him good-bye and not good night. He turned his deep-set eyes upon the general once more, taking out his watch as he said in brisk, businesslike tones, "But there's just one more point, sir, if there's time."

"All right," said the general youthfully. "Only three minutes by the short cut."

Plunging into business again, with the other reporters gathering about, Woods did not even notice the hurt shrug of the girl's shoulders as she joined Gilbert by the fountain, nor observe her leaning forward to whisper something, nor hear his cousin exclaim aloud, with delight, "Then it's settled! You mean it?" nor Frances's reply, "I mean only what I say. Sail with us if father agrees."

"That's all I ask," murmured Gilbert. "All I need," he added to himself, turning toward her father. "Gen-

eral, oh, general," he began. But the old gentleman was still occupied in conversation and gesticulation with Woods, and waved the impatient Gilbert aside with the gesture of one saying, "Business first, my lad."

Frances, watching this pantomime, felt her eyes wandering back and forth from Gilbert to the reporter, whose eyes did not wander at all.

Shayne, meanwhile, was holding forth to the other reporters from the top of the steps. "But our venerable leader, by his eloquence, his calm reasoning, his compelling example of disinterested citizenship, dispelled our doubts, soon brought us to his broad view of this important question." He went on while the representatives of the press smiled satirically.

Two of the reporters, meanwhile, had other thoughts to occupy them. Munson had not delayed a moment in finding out the ubiquitous Lascalles at the close of the statement given out with the aid of the general's secretary in the library. Lascalles had ejaculated, "Enormously valuable real estate—all along the water fronts—all sorts of jobs in that!" Just now he was saying, no longer so excited, but much more in earnest, "But I tell you, whatever it is, we can't do anything without General Cunningham's end of it. We've got to work him somehow for inside information."

"But he talked to you," returned young Munson, with an impudent grin, "once too often."

"And you," returned Lascalles, with a sniff of contempt, "you don't know enough. Neither do I, for that matter." He clapped his hand on the youngster's shoulder after the manner of the pawing kind, and flashed out, "There's only one man in all New York who could probe to the bottom of this thing!" And with the hand still on Munson's shoulder, he turned him around to get a view of Woods, with whom the old gentleman continued talking in a friendly, confidential manner.

Munson shook his head precociously. "We've bribed bishops and college

presidents to write for our paper, but we can't get Billy Woods."

"But if we got him fired from his own!" returned Lascalles, thinking quickly.

"Fire the great Billy Woods!"

"You heard what Holbein said. Do some thinking. Tonight, with this big piece of news! Suppose he were absent-minded tonight!"

"But he never drinks until the paper goes to press—you know that," returned Munson, getting excited. "And he's quit drinking."

"It's worth trying, anyway," returned Lascalles, approaching the terrace as if about to try it forthwith. Munson followed.

They heard Shayne concluding a sort of peroration as the newspaper men were turning to go. "And so I say, 'Three cheers for our venerable leader, our generous host, our great-hearted friend!'"

Woods, folding up his notes, caught the end of this, and put in quietly, for the benefit of the other newspaper men, "Don't worry. You'll get into the papers, Major Shayne. You always do. Come on, fellows. It's the last train out tonight," and led the way.

The general, shaking hands with Woods, was saying, "You can take a short cut this way by skirting the lake." Frances was looking on from the doorway. Gilbert was standing beside her, somewhat annoyed by the general's delay.

Woods was saying, "Best wishes for the bill, sir," and pocketing his notes. "Plenty of time," he remarked to the others. "Only three minutes' brisk walking."

Gilbert, meanwhile, taking the general's arm, remarked, "General, now that the reporters have quite finished," and with him, turned to go in. Frances, about to follow, had stopped to glance back at this strange manner of man, whom in all probability she would not see again for a year. She hesitated, and then involuntarily started down the steps, stopping herself abruptly at discovering that he

had not even noticed her in his intense solicitude for his business. He did not know that she had lingered in the shadow, and he did not know that she was going to Europe.

Lascalles knew and saw most of these things and guessed the rest. "Skip out with your story," he whispered to Munson. "I know Woods." And the coast being now clear of the general's observant eyes, he stepped out of the shadow to meet Billy. Woods having gained his object, had let go the tension enough to want a cigarette, and had stopped to grope in his pockets for one, as he started briskly toward the train. Lascalles glided forward with cigarette-case open.

"Thanks," said Woods, too preoccupied to recall that he had not seen Lascalles before.

"Say, old man," remarked Lascalles lazily, as Woods paused to strike the match. "Incidentally, I stumbled upon a ripping bit of society news out here."

Woods puffed, looked at the cigarette, handed back the box and started on. "Haven't fallen low enough to be a society reporter, have you, Harry?" He smiled, chaffing fraternally.

Lascalles took his arm. "But this will interest you."

"Bah!" Woods sneered, walking faster than Lascalles seemed inclined to walk. "We don't clutter up our columns with such rot." And subconsciously feeling the delay, he took out his watch as if to look at it by the light from the house. The Chinese lanterns were exhausted.

Before Woods had a chance to do so, Lascalles whispered, "Miss Cunningham's engagement to Townsend is off."

The watch remained in Billy's left hand as he exclaimed, "What! How do you know?"

"I saw it done."

"Where? When?"

"Here, while you were in there."

Woods involuntarily, or perhaps because Lascalles had him by the arm, looked back toward the house. There she stood, her white frock gleaming,

though the moon was hidden behind a cloud. The watch lay ticking unnoticed in his hand.

She saw the movement of the taller of the two figures and waved her hand.

"Good-bye," she called, and impulsively came down the steps. He, with the same impulse—an impulse older than the race—hastened back toward her. She was saying, as they approached each other in the semi-darkness, "I don't suppose I shall see you again for—oh, I don't know how long, so—" and she held out her hand to him.

The man took it, still absently holding his watch in the other hand. "But I'm not going across, you know," he said. "Forgotten that already?"

"But we are," began the girl, and was interrupted by his quick-breathed "You!"

"—as I tried to tell you on our walk"—she was stepping back from him now—"only you—"

"Why, the reason I could not go—don't you know? Don't you know?" He kept advancing, she retreating as they spoke quickly.

"—only you paid absolutely no attention to me."

"I did not dare to," he whispered, trembling palpably. "You know why. For how long? How long shall you be gone?"

"About a year."

"A year!" The watch had found its way back into its accustomed resting-place by the same subconscious cerebration that had brought it forth. And at the same moment the voices of young Townsend and the general came from within the house: "Frank! Oh, Frank! Frances, where are you?" Lascalles heard the general's well-known voice and fled, gloating. Woods heard nothing but the voice of the girl he loved.

"When do you sail?"

"In two weeks—on the *Cedric*."

"Why, that was my steamer."

Again the voices came out to them, unheeded, though nearer now: "Oh, Frank, where are you?"

"I know," she said to him, nodding

vigorously. "Wouldn't it have been jolly? Good-bye, Billy," and reaching the porch, held out her hand again.

"Jolly," he whispered, frantic. "Why, I love you."

In panic she sought to gain the steps, but found herself swung about, her hand imprisoned by both of his. By the glare of the open door shining down upon his face and through her hair, she saw with frightened joy the immemorial light in his dark eyes. Then Gilbert's shadow fell upon them from the hall.

"Oh, here she is, sir," he called behind him, seeing only the girl's back and his cousin's face as Woods released the hand.

"What's this I hear?" laughed the general, approaching. He put a hand on Gilbert's shoulder and beamed down upon his daughter. "Gilbert says you want him to cross with us, if I am willing." He stopped abruptly at discovering the reporter. Both men in the doorway were now looking down upon him. He, looking back, suddenly heard, as they all did, the whistle of the train approaching the station. His knees stiffened as if paralyzed.

"Cousin William," said Gilbert, "you seem to be too late."

Woods had regained his wits and his legs. He was well down the allée before either of the men shouted to him to stop. The train was out of the question. Frances called to him: "Billy—oh, Billy!"

Without answer, he disappeared in the distant dark, and her voice was thrown back to her from the silent trees.

PART II

IN PARK ROW

It was now almost two weeks since the mysterious disappearance of the erratic Billy Woods, and his fellow-members of the staff were talking about it.

It was the noon hour, and they were gathering in the dingy old city office for the beginning of their day's work—

a long, loft-like place, with tiers of writing-tables, like a school-room, and smelling of ink and paste like nothing in the world but a newspaper office.

Some of the late arrivals swinging in through the low gate, which barred strangers, were yawning as if just out of bed, and sat down morosely to wait for assignments before getting breakfast. Others, taking copies of that morning's fresh-smelling product, were clipping out their space and pasting it, not without a pleasurable re-perusal, on their "string," to be turned into the cashier's office on Friday.

All, however, first glanced in the direction of Woods's familiar place, which had gradually become heaped up with an accumulation of dust and unopened mail. Tommy, the favorite office boy, always brought the letters to Woods's desk because Billy always forgot to look in his mail-box near the door. When Billy first joined the staff as the youngest reporter there had not been boxes enough to go around, hence the habit. But not even Tommy was permitted to touch anything else there except the inkwell, and Tommy was the only one granted the proud privilege of filling it.

Most of those in the room were surprisingly young to be the authors of such cynically worldly-wise chapters of New York's history as diurnally appeared in the closely-printed pages of the sprightly paper of which they were all so proud. A few only looked old enough for what their work connoted, and their agedness seemed premature. In countenance and bearing, however, most of these older members of the staff suggested a heavy obliviousness to the manifold activities of the teeming town they knew so well. This contrast to the alert faces of the wide-awake youngsters about them was still more incongruous with the light touch and flashing wit of what these elder men wrote.

The latter were inclined to slovenliness in dress and movement—the tendency, it is said, in writers of all kinds, for some reason never explained. Among the former, however, were more

than one dapper young person, wearing the extreme variety of the prevalent collar or sporting an insistent waistcoat.

These were the two extremes, for there are men of all sorts, both outwardly and inwardly, in this business of news gathering, as many different sorts as there are in law or business, from the shyster at the magistrate's court, who shares the earnings of unfortunate women for securing their release by his pull, to the famous corporation lawyer down in Wall street who prostitutes his talents to get his share of tainted money for releasing his criminally respectable clients from inconvenient injunctions which seek to deprive them of the rights and privileges due a people born free and equal.

The rank and file of these reporters, however, were of neither extreme, being merely honest, self-respecting, downtown types such as may be seen crowding the Elevated trains and ferry-boats twice a day, except that these more or less industrious young citizens were possessed of a more precociously broad outlook on the world, since it was their business to know something about everything in it; and, incidentally, they earned more money than most of the salaried class of the same age. At a later stage in their career they would earn less, supposing they lacked the foresight to get out in time to choose some other career for which, no matter what it might be, they were now acquiring a splendid equipment—even those who blasphemed their work and advised their younger brothers at college never to go into it at all.

Meanwhile the day had begun—and still no Billy Woods. Stone, the inscrutable city editor, had arrived at his large, double table, called "The Desk," in the corner of the room by the window, long before most of his reporters were out of bed. With a hand on the pulse of the throbbing metropolis, he was giving out assignments, still looking over clippings as he did so. These had been arranged for him in neat rank by the young as-

sistant city editor who sat at his right. Haskill would clip them from the other papers with the wonderful neatness and despatch acquired by long practice; the city editor would glance over them with still more rapidity, preserving some in another little pile, dropping most of them carelessly on the floor, which was already becoming littered, meanwhile continuing, without interruption, to give out assignments to the men summoned one at a time to the desk.

"Tenement mystery in Williamsburg, Mr. Cole," said Stone, handing him a clipping. "Looks interesting."

Cole, donning hat and coat which he had only just removed, went to Williamsburg.

"Russell Sage's life threatened again," Stone remarked casually to another. "Probably a fake," he added discouragingly.

To a third he said, "The Harkness murder trial comes on this afternoon." A woman on trial for her life is always a good story, and this experienced reporter was not on a salary, but was a "space man." So his day would be happier than that of the woman he watched.

To another veteran, a reformed clergyman, Stone said, "Presbyterian Confession of Faith—good scrap on today," and then permitted his glance to shoot toward a waiting office boy who now stopped chewing gum to say, with a jerk of a dirty thumb, "Man outside wid a story telling how much de ladies in de four hundred spend on hand-made underclose."

"Tell him he came to the wrong newspaper," said the city editor in a languid tone, and turned to another reporter, an antique heirloom handed down, none too gently, from a former era. He had been everything in the newspaper business from office boy to editor-in-chief of his own paper in a Western city. At the present moment he was just back from a suburban assignment, given the evening before by the night city editor. "Well, did he die in great agony?" Stone asked, considerably jocular.

"No, damn it!" the ancient newspaper man replied with honest disappointment. It was all very well for Stone to joke, he had his regular salary, but this reporter had a family to support, and his cuffs were ragged. In fact, he had two families, having married a second time a few years ago.

"Hard luck," said the editor, almost sympathetically. "Have a talk with the widow?"

"Nope," sighed the dreary old reporter. "Still prostrated."

"Too bad," said Stone, "for it would have been good stuff. Keep it under two sticks, please." He indicated the space of three inches with thumb and finger.

The ragged-edged reporter, sighing wearily, went back to his desk to write, though there was no hurry to write a story of that length. "Just my luck," he complained to a colleague across the table, speaking in the manner of a contemporary; "third story in succession to fizzle out. My new baby's got pneumonia, his mother is still in bed, and the rent's due next Monday." Then, clearing his throat, "Say, old man, just a 'V,' will you, till the ghost walks?"

"I would," was the reply, "but I met an old friend last night and blew in every cent I had."

The old reporter tried elsewhere, but each, in turn, had some equally good excuse. Others, seeing him first, got out of the way before he reached them. There was hardly a man on the staff to whom he did not already owe more than they ever expected to get back, and he shared their expectations in the matter. He only clung to his position on the staff by means of his ancient pull. He and a certain august person in the inner room had once been promising striplings together. The one had gone up, the other down.

While the staff pretended not to watch, he was seen shuffling slowly up to the city editor's desk again, where, pretending to look for something he had left, he enacted the little comedy they had often witnessed before, which

Scott called "melting Stone." The old reporter wore the same shamefaced expression he always wore, consciously or otherwise, which Scott called his "touching look." And the city editor, still at work, looked oblivious and preoccupied as usual, but put his hand in his pocket as usual, in a careless fashion as if he merely liked to work with a hand in his pocket. Presently he took it out again and let it rest carelessly on the desk a moment. Then presently the old reporter seemed to find what he was looking for, the city editor meanwhile working intermittently and not once looking up, and all the rest of the staff carefully averting their smiling faces for fear of hurting his feelings. The old reporter put on his hat, walked down to the gate, turned and made a signal to the first man he had struck for a loan, which meant, "Join me downstairs," and pantomimed taking a drink.

The city editor would not have seen this, even if his eyes were not shortsighted—one cannot very well have good eyesight and be the best copy-reader in town at the same time—for the newest reporter had at that moment rushed into the office and up to the desk in a state of important excitement. He was unused to the ways of newspapers and knew nothing about Stone, except that he was afraid of him. "Big story," he cried. "Eight Italians killed by that boiler explosion. I saw the bodies myself."

Stone, twitching his ugly black pipe in irritation, cut him off shortly. "Anything worth while?" he asked in a tone that was ominously demure.

The cub reporter was a bit taken aback. "Eight men were killed," he repeated. "Eight human beings." They were the first dead bodies he had ever seen, and he was still impressed with the awfulness of it.

The city editor hadn't time to look up again. "Ten lines," he said, and the newest reporter learned his first lesson in news values. But he was so very new that his amazement made him wait as if dazed, thereby endangering himself unconsciously to annihilation.

Some of the older men, knowing Stone, drifted nearer the desk, casually, as if looking for copy paper, in order to enjoy the fun. But they were destined to be surprised and the cub reporter to be given his second lesson in news values. "Anything else?" asked the city editor, restraining himself mercifully.

"N-no," hesitated the cub, unaware of the audience behind him. "By the way," he added in an informal, conversational tone, quite different from his former official report, "there was a baby sleeping in a baby carriage thirty feet from the explosion. Funny, but it wasn't even touched."

The city editor looked up. "Worth a dozen Dagos," he said. "Write a half-column."

And still no Billy Woods.

Certain of the staff, who, like the old drunken one, had come in late to report on morning assignments given the night before, were making the usual inquiries.

"Oh, say, this thing is getting monotonous," remarked Scott, a youthful cynic who was acquiring a reputation as a phrase-maker, and knew it. "Every day now for the last two weeks it's 'Where's Billy Woods?' instead of 'Good morning.'"

"And instead of 'How are you feeling?'" put in Jones, somewhat older, but still young enough to be overdressed, "it's 'Has the governor signed the Cunningham bill?'"

"Well, what's the matter with the Cunningham bill?" This came in a loud, Southern drawl from a big, burly man bending over one of the letter-boxes just outside of the entrance-gate. He carried a suit-case and his name was Covington.

"Another!" sighed Jones wearily, and Scott shouted gaily, "Say, you *have* been out of the world!" Covington now came in with the smile of a man who had been away for a fortnight, and was greeted with hellos and handshakes. "Well," they said, "you didn't get shot down there in the mountains?"

"That's a pity," put in Scott, who

always thought it funny to say things of that sort.

Covington, looking brown and merry, remarked that Tennessee feuds were dead slow compared to crossing Broadway a moment before. Then, being able to wait no longer, added the inevitable, "Say, what did you think of my stuff?" They told him, for the most part frankly, what they thought. Some of it was praise, some of it was not, but it was all given in a friendly, fraternal spirit and was helpful criticism.

They were diverted by the high voice of Haskill, the assistant city editor, who, with the telephone receiver in his hand, announced to Stone, with some excitement: "General Cunningham left Albany for New York five hours ago."

Stone said, "Huh!"

"Our sleepy correspondent just discovered it," Haskill added, by way of palliation for his excitement.

Stone, who had glanced at the clock, called "Linton."

One of the reporters dropped his feet to the floor—they had been resting on his table—and hastened to the desk.

"Cunningham's office and see if he's there. Hurry."

Linton went out quickly.

"What's all this excitement about the Water-front Parks bill?" asked Covington, among the gossiping group of reporters. "Nothing in the papers about it—except political hot air."

"Because nobody in Park Row can get the inside story," he was informed.

"Louisville papers were all I could get hold of down there," said Covington. "Passed both Houses, didn't it?"

"Right. Without any of the expected opposition."

"Well, but I thought the governor had pledged his support."

"Right."

"Then why doesn't he sign it?"

"That's the story!" replied several voices at once.

"Governor jealous of Cunningham's returning popularity?" Covington asked.

"Risking his own every hour he

postpones signing the bill," was the reply. And one of the older men supplemented, "Got to hurry up then. Tomorrow's the tenth day. According to the Constitution of the State of New York, the bill becomes a law whether the governor signs it or not"—with a look at the clock—"in a little less than twenty-two hours."

"Can't Billy Woods clear up the mystery?" asked Covington innocently, and wondered why his question was greeted with stares and smiles.

"Say, he *has* been out of the world," Scott repeated himself. And, taking Covington by the shoulders, turned him about and pointed at Woods's desk nearer the front of the room.

"Again?" asked Covington. "Where is he?"

"Where is he!" smiled Jones. "They're telegraphing all over two continents to find out." Then his friends had the rare pleasure of telling Covington how the presses had been held open on the night of Woods's disappearance two weeks ago until the last moment; how crazy the managing editor and the night editor and all the rest had been when they had to go to press without even a word from Billy.

The other part of the incident was also related. Holbein, of one of the rival papers, who had been at Fernleigh that night, had stated frankly that if it had not been for Billy, none of them would have had "a smell" of the story he alone was beaten on; that it was Billy, too, who had arranged, before the others arrived, to keep the nearest telegraph office open. As they hurried to the train for this telegraph office, fourteen miles distant from Fernleigh, Billy had lingered to say something to that man Lascalles. The latter, out of breath, had caught the train just as it started, and said he had waited to warn Billy, who wanted to bid Miss Cunningham good night. Since then, no one had seen or heard of him, not even Lascalles, apparently, who was going about his business as usual, though his employers were threatening to discharge him for his

old crime of faking. They had no reason, as yet, to believe any more serious rumors against him, or he would have been kicked out without warning.

II

THE only woman reporter employed regularly on the staff was a small, dark Russian-Jewess, with a strange, concentrated face, suggesting the characteristic smoldering emotions which blaze up readily. It was one of those faces painters find interesting and few other men. She was a recent acquisition. Her name was Daros, and she came in quite late, while the men were still gossiping.

Though as lacking in breeding as she was in adornment—the women typewriters in the next room stared at her clothes heartlessly—she showed the refinement of a good education. She did not condescend to sneer at the other women, and held herself aloof from them quite as much as they did from her. It was the general opinion of the office that she was an anarchist. It was well known that she sent and received mysterious messages, and as she seemed to like the air of mystery, the men, who treated her with courteous impersonality, let her think they were very much impressed, and thus both sides got harmless diversion out of it.

One of the gum-chewing boys had responded to her grave good morning with patronizing indifference. She pronounced her English words as educated Russians pronounce all languages, more correctly than those whose language it is and who think, because it is theirs, they can do what they like with it. But the boy, who was of the same extraction, had been born in America, and looked upon her as an "ignorant foreigner."

She drew close to him and began, with an eager, surreptitious air, to put the usual question with regard to Mr. Woods, but was cut short by the boy's "Naw, he ain't," without so much as shifting his gum.

"Ah," said Miss Daros, non-committally, and looked around to see whether she was observed. Then, seeing Tommy standing idle, she decided that he would prove a more trustworthy intermediary. Turning her back so that no possible observer might see, she first gave Tommy a coin, a rather heavy one, which made the lad say, "What's dis fur?"

"For you," said Miss Daros, with clear enunciation and without a smile. "And this," she added, slipping a square envelope into his hands, "is for Mr. Woods."

Stone, seeing a female and guessing rightly that it was Miss Daros, called her sharply.

"Yes, sir," she called back, and added to Tommy, "Not on his desk. He might forget to look at it. And do not you forget, for there will be a second one," and she pointed to the other hand, which held the coin.

"Dat's easy money," thought Tommy, as Miss Daros hurried to the desk and he reviewed certain recent losses at craps.

"Late again," Stone said, not as a criticism, apparently, so much as a comment, though it was not like Stone to make unmeaning comments, nor was it like him to waste time from his work to look at her while he spoke.

Miss Daros suppressed a yawn. "Overslept," she said.

Stone, wasting no more time on further comments, handed her two tickets, saying in his quick, jerky way, "This charity performance at the opera this evening—all the society crowd will be there. First chance of the season to size one another up. We want a good story about people in the boxes."

"Costumes?"

"Don't run much about their clothes. Tell how they go there to see and be seen. A display of wealth, the flesh and the devil for charity." The city editor was unusually loquacious today, and seemed to be interested in her. "Do it humorously if you can. Keep your sociology out of it. Apparently take 'em seriously so they won't be

offended, but give readers who are amused a chance to smile; those who are envious a chance to jeer—for Charity. Jones." And he went on giving assignments without further comments. But it was noticed that he had left off all other work while talking to her in a vein he seldom employed. One might have thought that he was taking the trouble to be satirical about the vanities of fashionable life, which was not like him at all. His attitude toward the whole human spectacle was a Jove-like tolerance toward it all as long as it made good copy for his paper. For what was the object of all the manifold human activities except to make news for his staff to write as he directed, and for his copy readers to polish into proper form with adequate heads thereon?

Miss Daros had gone to her writing-table. She hesitated a moment, returned to Tommy again, who was jeering the other boy for the chance he had missed, and reminded her emissary that it was a secret mission. She then took her place at her table, throwing off her street-coat, but still wrapped in mystery.

Henderson, the political reporter, a middle-aged man, came into the room from uptown, smoking his perpetual cigar with a puff of importance.

Stone recognized his footsteps, felt the importance and said, before Henderson reached the desk, "What did you get?"

"Absolutely nothing," growled Henderson, with a gesture of discouragement. "Amen Corner swear they are as much in the dark about it as we are. Think it must be some private quarrel between Cunningham and the governor."

"See Shayne?"

Henderson shook his head.

"Nordheimer?"

"You can't get within a mile of any of the commissioners. Taking their cue from Cunningham. All agree to say nothing."

"What did you get?" interrupted Stone, irritated.

"Nothing."

"Write a column."

As if to make matters worse, young Linton came back to the office at this point to announce that General Cunningham had not been near his office for a week, and Stone scowled at him as if that were his fault. Linton escaped to the remnant of the group of reporters who were still talking about Billy Woods. Covington was saying, "So that is Lascalles's theory of the mystery, is it?" This made Henderson, writing his column about nothing at a nearby desk, look up with a pitying smile.

"Did you ever catch Lascalles telling the truth?" he asked.

"Say, I saw Lascalles down at the corner," said Linton. "Still there when I came back."

Henderson smiled again. "It's encouraging to find some of you boys learning to use your eyes," he said. "Another of that crew is hanging around Billy Woods's apartment any time you may be happening to pass there, night or day." With that, he bent to his work again and wrote: "However, on the other hand, the theory has been advanced from certain influential quarters that while the Water-front Parks would—" and so on.

"Ah, the grand old man has a theory," whispered Scott audibly.

"Moreover," added Henderson, ignoring the chaff and holding back the advance of the theory, with his pen suspended, "there's something queer going on in this very office."

"Now we'll find out all about it," said Scott, with mock gravity.

Henderson shrugged his shoulders and went on with his theory. "Keep your eyes open," was all he would say.

III

TOMMY, the office boy, hurled a wad of copy paper at an inky other boy with proofs from the composing-room, bumped into a passing editorial writer, displacing the latter's dignity, and strolled leisurely up to the desk and

waited to get Mr. Stone's attention. Presently Stone nodded.

"Old gent outside to see Mr. Woods——"

Before the city editor could scowl, the quick youngster added, "Yissir; I told 'im; but I tink dere's a big story into it." Again he tempted fate, but warded it off by adding, "Old gent looks like de pictures of General Cunningham," and gloated inwardly at having made the city editor straighten up. Haskill also looked at him.

"Why didn't you say so?" Stone snarled. "Ask him if there's anything I can do."

"Yissir," said Tommy, going, and added, showing a proper appreciation of the relativity of news values, "Dere's a young loidy wid 'im. She keeps sayin', 'Now don't excite yourself, fadder.' De ole man's sort of up in de air! an' dere's a hot Willy-boy, too, and he says——"

But Stone twitched his pipe and Tommy took the warning sign and hurried on down the room.

"Haskill"—Stone allowed himself a slight smile—"must be something doing to make him come to us." For the general had never forgiven them the interview which had cost him the Presidential nomination. He would not believe that they had been as innocent, if not as great, sufferers as himself. They had never forgiven him for not believing it, nor for his public utterances of his belief in the unscrupulousness of their lightning changes in editorial policy. But at one time or another nearly every prominent citizen finds it convenient to call upon the newspapers for the purpose of having something put in or kept out of their pages. This is usually called the "coöperation of the fearless press."

Stone went down to meet the distinguished old gentleman now entering the gate. He was accompanied by his daughter and Gilbert Townsend. The girl seemed inclined to come all the way into the room with her father, but he shook his head, and Gilbert persuaded her to be seated outside of

the gate. "It's no place for you," he said.

"But look at father," she replied. The general seemed to be laboring under considerable excitement, which he was controlling pretty well. Frances thought he had aged during the last two weeks, but hoped it was not so bad as the nerve-specialist let them fear.

Gilbert did not approve of this move and had done his best to dissuade the general from coming. Frances had prevailed. She watched her father solicitously as the city editor came forward to meet him, and throughout the interview her eyes remained fixed upon him; quite unconscious, which was remarkable, of the many eyes that indulged in a glance or two at her. They were not all men's eyes. Miss Daros seemed on the point of going down to speak to her once or twice, but took it out in looking at her instead. She had met Miss Cunningham some time ago in an East Side settlement.

The city editor had tried to start the general talking while leading him apart, but the old gentleman had many preliminary questions to ask about the probable whereabouts of Woods, and it took a long time to get him off the subject.

Stone offered him a chair. "Anything we can do?" he asked.

"I am just back from Albany." The editor nodded with respectful patience. "My time is extremely limited, extremely limited. I am sailing for Europe in the morning and there are many matters to arrange. But before I go——"

It was impossible for Stone to endure his stately deliberation. "Mr. Manning, the managing editor, has not come down yet," he cut in, with an apology, "but if you want to talk to one of the editorial writers—I take it you want our coöperation to make the governor sign that bill?"

"No. To make him veto it!"

"Veto your own bill!" The general had done better than Tommy; he had made Stone exclaim, something which

made all those who were near enough drop their work and take notice, for this was a big story.

"What's the matter with your bill, sir?" snapped out Stone, trying to color his eagerness with respect. "May I ask what you charge?"

"Nothing."

"What do you suspect?"

The general smiled grimly. "Everything," he said, and subsided.

Stone was leaning forward eagerly, all his faculties alert and waiting. He knew it was best for the old man to tell his own story first and to ask questions afterward. But a whole second had gone by. "What has aroused your suspicions, sir?" Stone inquired.

The general hesitated. Stone picked up things from the table and put them down elsewhere. The old man cleared his throat.

"It began—it sounds trivial—while guests were at my house. My daughter's attention was directed to the actions of certain members of my board—we need mention no names in this matter—their heads together, or something equally insignificant in itself. That was the beginning. Since then, many things. In fact, their whole attitude in this matter, since its inception, seems—I am now persuaded—suspicious, convincingly suspicious."

"Suspicious—any real evidence?" asked Stone.

"Would I stop here with it?" returned the general haughtily. "If I had succeeded with my lawyers, even detectives, the governor would brave your criticism and veto that now much-lauded measure which bears my name. As it is, it was only by the greatest effort—in fact, I may say that it is entirely due to our ancient friendship, that I succeeded in keeping him from signing it. I stayed his hand almost in the very act. He has now given me what amounts to an ultimatum. Unless some plausible reason is adduced for vetoing the bill, he will be reluctantly compelled——"

"I see," said Stone. He saw how very different the real inside story was

from the theories his and all the other newspapers had been obliged to work on. He was looking for threads by which to gather the real story. He saw Manning, the managing editor, stopping at the entrance gate to speak in surprise to Miss Cunningham, who was pointing excitedly at her father.

"As a last resort I have been persuaded," the old man went on in his courtly manner, "to come to you because you number among the members of your board—I should say your staff—that young man Woods who ferreted out the corruption in the Dock Board and who——"

"Here comes the managing editor—Mr. Manning. Better talk to him."

Manning, looking well-fed and imperturbable as usual, approaching gallantly with Frances, and followed enduringly by Gilbert, now called out to the general: "Ah, General Cunningham. An unexpected pleasure." These two had sat next to each other often at dinners and put up a very good bluff of enjoying it. Manning held out his hand effusively. The statesman greeted the editor with the stately politeness that always won so much admiration from women and so little affection from men. Manning started the three callers up the room in the direction of his private office opposite the city-desk, and lingered a moment to whisper hurriedly to Stone, "If Woods *should* come, I want to see him after we finish." Then he hurried after the others and led the way out of the room and through a passage to the insignificant compartment where important things were done.

"My advice, sir," whispered Gilbert, "is to leave this place."

IV

THE coming of Secretary Cunningham had caused a ripple of astonishment that was still splashing around the edges of the city-room. He seemed the last man in the world to be seeking the "coöperation of the fearless press," and this the last paper to ask it from.

"Bad case of nerves," smiled Haskill to his superior, as the latter returned to the desk.

"Nerves or nerve?" asked Stone.

Haskill did not understand.

"What did he go into politics for?" replied Stone. "What do they all go into politics for? Suppose he put a hidden string in his bill. Suppose the newspapers, when the time came, caught him pulling something out with it? Point to this bluff with us and put it up to the others." Stone returned to his work.

"Say, Mr. Stone," asked Haskill. "Don't you believe in anybody?"

"Haskill, I've been in the newspaper business thirty-five years."

Covington had received an assignment and strolled out of the room with the cheerful whistle of a confirmed New Yorker, delighted to be back on the exhilarating streets of the fascinating city of his adoption. Halfway down the stairs he stopped, turned and ran back to the city room. "Say, you—all," he yelled, "yonder comes Billy Woods!" The others began asking questions. Before they could be answered, the cause of the excitement was bending over the latch at the gate, looking grave and concerned, but not as if aware of having been away, or of their excitement over his return.

"Cunningham here?" he asked quietly of Jones, the nearest to the gate.

"Yes, in Manning's room," was the reply. "Was asking for you."

"Asking for me?" Woods snapped his fingers in irritation. "I was looking for him. Reached Albany just in time to miss him. Chased him all the way down. What's the inside story?"

"Doesn't know himself. Banking on your getting it. Where the devil have you been?" The others had gathered around and began firing questions at him. Woods blinked and looked them all over as if considering them as individuals for the first time, and feeling very glad to see them.

"Where have you been all this time?" they repeated.

"Oh, been away," he replied.

"Know how long?" asked one of the group.

Woods paused and turned to Tommy, who was grinning beside him in the doorway. "How long was it, Tommy?"

"Thirteen days, sir, dis evenin'."

Woods turned to the group. "Thirteen days."

"Dis evenin'," whispered Tommy.

"This evening," said Woods. "Why, hello, Covvy!" he exclaimed suddenly, beaming at his old friend Covington. "When did you get back? Awfully glad to see you. Have much fun down there? Great country, isn't it?" He seemed to want to hear all about it from Covington.

Miss Daros, in the background, at last got Tommy's eye. She made an inconspicuous signal which Tommy interpreted by putting the note into Woods's hand.

"But what did you do all this time, Billy?" the others were asking.

Woods, ignoring them as he did the note, which he slipped absently into his pocket, drew Tommy aside and whispered, "Who's got the London job, Tommy—tomorrow on the *Cedric*?" He glanced in the direction of Manning's room.

"Search me," whispered Tommy. "Dey wanted you bad, Mr. Woods. Chewin' de rag over how you turned dem down. Where'd you go, sir?" Tommy was privileged.

Woods looked at the boy and smiled. "Oh, I don't know. I wanted to get off the earth. Ever want to get off the earth, Tommy?"

"Did I! Say! De sportin' editor, he was goin' to take me to see Jeff knock out—"

"Oh, Woods," interrupted the city editor authoritatively from the other end of the room.

"Yes, sir," Woods responded briskly, and started up the room, swinging his cane gaily; but on the way he seemed to become more and more fully awake to his iniquity and walked more and more slowly as he drew near, looking at the editor with a whimsical expres-

sion as if humor and remorse were both tugging at his countenance at once. "Doesn't look as if he'd been off on a bat," whispered one of the group, after Billy passed. Woods had not been drunk.

Stone, in a grave tone, now said, "Mr. Woods."

The prodigal replied, "Yes, sir," once more, but this time in a different voice.

"He's calling him 'Mr. Woods,'" commented Jones to the other reporters, all of whom had been looking on with more than the usual interest in Woods's return. The only thing invariable about his comportment on these occasions was its difference to the last time.

"Absent thirteen days without leave," said Stone briefly.

"No, sir," replied Woods. "Won't be thirteen days till tonight."

"Not the first time, either," said Stone, as sternly as he could to Woods.

"No, sir; but I imagine it's the last."

This was no time for facetiousness. "We needed you," remarked Stone, with eloquent brevity.

"Needn't rub it in," rejoined Woods, looking toward Manning's room uneasily.

"For the Cunningham bill," added Stone, which made Woods start and look back anxiously at the editor.

"There's a big story in it now," said the latter, "and you were the only man for it."

"Were!" interjected Woods in a low tone.

"Mr. Manning wants to see you," said Stone, and bent over his work again as if that settled it; and usually it did.

"I thought so," muttered Woods limply, while the other reporters in the background, shaking their heads gravely, spread the news. "He's sending him in to see the old man!" They had all suspended work for the time to watch Woods and Stone. Those who had received assignments were standing around waiting with their hats on, anxious to know the worst or the best.

Woods was gazing at the managing editor's door. Stone, without looking up from his work, said to him, "Engaged at present," and Woods turned his gaze upon him and kept it there as if demanding further enlightenment. "Didn't tell me what he wanted with you, Billy."

"Oh, I can guess," laughed Woods. And, with that, he abruptly strode across to his desk and began packing up his possessions, pulling out books and manuscripts, pipes and odds and ends, working most industriously, and apparently oblivious of the fact that the rest of the staff were looking on in silence.

Miss Daros, taking advantage of their preoccupation, quietly stole toward the telephone booth, but found it occupied at present by one of the boys, so she stood outside and waited dreamily.

Jones was saying to one of the others: "I thought they'd let him try the Cunningham bill as a final chance to redeem himself." That seemed to be the general impression.

Woods was in something of a daze. When he left Fernleigh on the run, that fatal night, it was partly with a blind hope of Lascalles's or someone's making the train wait. When he saw the red lights of the rear car fading away just out of reach, he first set out madly to run the fourteen miles to the telegraph office, stopped at the first farm-house, finally secured a horse, almost killed it, found the telegraph office dark, searched wildly for the operator's house, though he knew the first edition had gone to press, and—finally sat down on the curb of the dark, deserted village street, and swore. He had let the paper be beaten on the news, and he had lost everything he valued in life.

Aimlessly he took the first train for New York, boarded a tramp steamer—the first one he came to—and tumbled into a bunk, exhausted. It was either that or get drunk, and he decided not to get drunk. When he awoke he was some hundred miles down the coast and found he was

bound for Havana. The captain told him that this information had been supplied when the request for passage was granted. Very likely it was; he had not known; he had not cared; he wanted merely to get away from New York and stay away and never look at a newspaper again. Then came the storm. When the slow old tub finally reached Havana harbor the first thing he did was to ask for all the New York newspapers, as might be expected of a newspaper man. The rest may be guessed. He saw that there was something mysterious going on in regard to the Cunningham bill, after all.

He borrowed some money, hurried across to Key West, took the express north and landed in Albany just too late to be of use. He came down on the same train as the Cunningham party—without knowing it until leaving the Grand Central Station, when he saw them starting off in their carriage, followed in a cab, and waited downstairs as long as he could stand it. The girl had led him away from the office and now she brought him back again.

Woods, sorting out letters, tearing up some of them, preserving others, all in nervous haste, became aware of the many glances in his direction. His colleagues hastily averted their gaze and pretended to be writing or talking of something else. The sentient Henderson, in turning his eyes from Billy, caught a glimpse of something else—the Daros woman disappearing quietly into the telephone-booth. There was something in the expression of her back that arrested his highly cultivated instincts. Hastening over, he said, with his well-known urbanity that had brought in many a column of political news, "May I not get the number for you, Miss Daros?"

The young woman came out of the telephone-booth rather hastily. "Oh, no matter," she said. "It's nothing important." And Henderson rejoined the others, shaking his head wisely. "That's the one," he said.

Scott smiled derisively. "The least likely person on the staff," he commented with assurance. "Don't you know the gossip among the typewriter girls in the next room? Why, she worships Billy Woods, they say. Always has since the first day she came—and before that, too, very likely. Wasn't he the one to discover her, wasting her talents in an East Side sweat-shop?"

Henderson asked the young man if he could finish the well-known quotation beginning, "Hell hath no fury—" And then both turned at hearing Woods calling for Tommy, quite as if he wanted ink or copy paper.

The boy came on the run, as he always did for Billy, and seldom for anyone else. Woods made a sign to finish packing up the things.

"Yes, sir," whispered the boy in frightened tones. "Where'll I take 'em, sir?"

"I don't know," said the idol. "Send you word tomorrow." Then, with one of his sudden movements, he turned abruptly toward the circle of his comrades and caught them in the act of staring at him, quite to their confusion. They all dropped their eyes, but he kept on looking at them, first one and then another, as if while he had a chance he meant to fix in his mind the characteristics of each. Then he stepped toward them slowly, as if he knew he could not avoid saying good-bye, and meant to have it over with. There was an awkward silence. They seemed to feel it more than he did. "Covvy," he said, holding out his hand to the nearest, "there's one thing I'd like to ask of you as a parting favor." His voice sounded very grave.

"All right, Billy," Covington made answer.

"But I've asked you before. You won't do it."

"I reckon I will," smiled Covington, who was a big, burly fellow.

"When referring to children, in your writings, please just once in a while, for my sake, call them something else than 'little tots.'" Then

he turned to another. "Henderson, you've been making those poor infinitives of yours do the split again. It's so vulgar. Say, Scott, you're a bright boy and some day you may learn to write. But would you mind not being so persistently facetious? It annoys me so. Let go once in a while and be natural. See how it feels. Jones, here's my knife. You're always borrowing it, so you must need it a good deal; keep it. Oh, and Lee—my compliments and my paste-pot. There! You can dip your pen in it as much as you like now. See here, Berwin"—he picked up the latter's coat and placed it on his own table—"won't push it off any more." Then, on an impulse, he strode down to where one of the younger reporters, Linton, stood modestly looking on in the background. "Didn't you write this East Side dispossession story?" he demanded abruptly, tapping the copy of the paper in his hand. The cub, somewhat overcome, admitted that he had. "Thought I recognized your fist in it. Well, all I've got to say is that this part about the little girl all alone on the doorstep still hugging her doll—bully!—great! Wish I had written that. I wish—" He abruptly turned away again and called to Tommy. "Oh, never mind the rest. You can have the stuff, all of it." Then he added to the boy, "Don't know just how I'm going to get along without you, Tommy. No one else knows how to fill my ink-well. Always put in too much. Get it all over my fingers."

Tommy showed signs of whimpering. "You an' me woiked together so slick, Mr. Woods." Then to demonstrate that he wasn't dreaming of crying, he struck a base-ball attitude of a catcher and added, "Like Bowerman and Mathewson."

"That's right," Woods nodded. "In our palmy days we've handled some pretty good stories, haven't we, Tommy? Remember the Republican Convention, how you had to climb over the shoulders of the delegates to get my copy? But you got it." This was

a little too much for the boy, who could bluff off the tears no longer. "That's all right," said the worshipful Mr. Woods, patting him on the back, which dislodged the tears and made place for fresh ones. And his shame being exposed to the world, the boy was now quite shameless and opened his heart with snuffles. "De poiper can't get along," he spluttered, "without you," he gulped, "an' me."

"You and Mr. Manning will make out somehow," said Woods comfortingly.

Tommy shook his head vigorously. "Quittin' at the end of me week," he replied, turning away toward the end of the room where he belonged. "I'm goin' to ask fur me release."

Woods found himself confronting Miss Daros, whom he admired professionally, despite her unpleasant personality. As usual, he was impersonally gallant in his manner toward her, as he said, "Miss Daros, you don't show me your verses any more. So sorry."

Miss Daros said she had ceased writing verses, and shot a glance about the room to see if any might be looking on.

"Miss Daros," said Woods, "your stuff is one of the features of the paper. Keep it up. We—they—need something serious for ballast."

"Oh, are you leaving us?" she said, with averted gaze, and added in low tones, so as not to be overheard, "Before you even read your letters?"

Woods bowed absently and turned away toward the men he had worked shoulder to shoulder with so many years, all his newspaper life.

"Don't suppose I'll see much of you fellows any more," he said, with a little laugh, standing on one foot and swinging the other back and forth. "But I'll see your stuff every morning anyway," he added, with a quick nod. "That's the next best thing." He groped for a cigarette, lighted it, threw down the match and nodded again. "Keep on reading the old paper—you can bank on that." Then, with his hands in his pockets, he sauntered up the room, whistling thoughtfully and

turned into the inclosure leading to the managing editor's office.

The door was ajar. He could distinguish the general's voice, more excited than he had ever heard it. Suddenly he heard it more strongly, looked up, saw the door open, and Frances hurriedly crossing the passage toward him, followed by the others.

V

It was the first time they had seen each other in the thirteen days during which each had thought of but little else, and that little was what caused them to be brought together at last. But there was no time for greetings. The others were only a little way behind, still talking vigorously.

"I knew you'd come," she whispered hastily. Her eyes were wide. Her cheeks were flushed. "I brought him here. It was to see you." She misunderstood the look on Woods's face. "You don't want to help me!"

"Want to!" It happened to be his dream of old. "I'm too late again."

"No; not again; not either time," she returned. They had moved, ahead of the others, into the inclosure. "Oh," she whispered confidently, "I knew you would not refuse—no matter what happened."

The general was excited and angry; he did not even see Woods. Gilbert did, and hurried to her. "Then deal with the subject editorially," the old gentleman was demanding, as Manning coolly nodded assent with a quiet smile, "as I have outlined"—at which Manning, still smiling, varied his nod with a shake of the head—"or else write nothing, nothing whatever!" The excited old gentleman swept away with a gesture of disgust.

"To get his bill signed?" Woods whispered, perplexed.

"No. He'll explain," she replied, as Manning made answer to her father, somewhat emphatically. "We shall write just exactly what we see fit, General Cunningham."

The general stopped short. "What!"

he exclaimed in amazement. Gilbert tried to lead Frances away, fearing a scene.

"Suppose," the managing editor replied calmly to the glowing general, "suppose we were to tell the patient public the simple truth of what has taken place here—how ex-Secretary Cunningham, for reasons best known to himself, at the eleventh hour comes to an unadmired and unadmiring paper, makes vague insinuations against his colleagues, when too late for investigation, and," the editor added with significant force, "requests that his own bill, written by his own hand—"

But at that point the girl intervened. Brushing away from Gilbert, she turned her father about quickly, to prevent an outbreak. "No, father," she cried nervously. "He's come back. Here he is."

The general turned toward Woods. Manning, too, was surprised to see him and straightway approached him, saying uncomfortably to the general, "I beg your pardon, but—" then turning to Woods and looking still more ill at ease, for he was fond of him, "Left word to see you in private, Billy," he said, taking a cablegram out of his pocket. He turned to the general again. "The chief has been cabling all week," he said, "to find Woods and put him on this very story. This is his last cable," added Mr. Manning, handing it to Woods, who read it in silence, nodded, passed it to the general and turned away from Frances.

The general, in his excitement, read it aloud. "'When Woods returns, dismiss him.'"

"'Fraid that's final," said Manning.

"Don't you think we'd better go?" said Gilbert gently, taking the old gentleman's arm. "All they want here is a sensation—a 'big story'!" He was too considerate to add, "I told you so."

"You are right," said the general, turning away, still hot and excited, his voice loud with it. "From my former experience I should have had better

judgment than to ask a newspaper's aid to kill my bill."

Woods, the broken-hearted lover, heard this and straightway became a newspaper man again. "To kill the bill! Your own bill! Is that it?" His voice was authoritative and his words came faster and faster. "Why didn't you say so! My! What a story! Look at the time! There'll be a dozen men to see, a score of records to look up. But"—the lover shot a glance at Frances—"oh, what a chance!"

They were coming down the aisle, all excited, all oblivious of the gaping reporters.

Frances put in to Billy, "But, if you are no longer—"

"Not for this paper, for any other paper, or no paper," he interrupted. "For you, sir. The proof is all you want. The governor will do the rest. Just give me the chance. Aren't you going to give me a chance?"

The general walked on down the room. Gilbert was holding the gate open for him. The old man turned and looked at Woods. "No," he said.

Woods rushed through after him. His voice came still higher now and his words poured out more rapidly. "But I tell you there's no one in all New York who knows that gang as I do—I'll dig to the bottom of their deviltry—I'll work as I never worked before if you'll let me work for you, sir—I'll block your bill—I'll land those two in Sing Sing where I put their pals—I'll keep your name clear and clean—only just let me try!"

As he spoke, he saw Frances urging her father to give heed, and Gilbert at the door urging him to come. The general now spoke for himself. He was still greatly overwrought. "Absent from duty when his employers needed him most, Frances. Hardly the one to trust in such an emergency." He went on out of the door, Woods following frantically. The girl was still insistent. "No!" repeated the old man with finality. "I never believed in the newspapers." He made for the stairs, with Gilbert, all the

more furious for having given way to his fury.

Frances lingered near the doorway long enough to hold out her hand to Woods. "I believe in you, Billy," she whispered. Then Gilbert, sent back by the general for his daughter, bore the girl away. He had the air of one having the right to do so. But he refrained from expressing in words his opinion of the disgraceful scene for which he held his cousin largely responsible, and against which he had done all in his power to warn the general.

In the body of the room the others had already got down to work, almost, if not quite, as if nothing extraordinary had happened. Stone glanced knowingly at Haskill, with a faint smile at his previous guilelessness about the string. "What did I tell you, Haskill?" he said, and called for Henderson.

"Looks very much like it," admitted Haskill.

Woods, forgetting all else, was still gazing out into the hall where Frances had disappeared with Gilbert.

"He's got it all." He spoke aloud in his abstraction. "And I—I can't even work for her."

"Oh, yes, you can." He heard the low voice of Miss Daros passing close by him on the way out. "Look in your pocket."

"What!" asked Woods, still dazed, till he found the note. He read it while Stone, in his matter-of-fact manner droned on to Henderson, as if he did not realize that he was giving out the story of the day: "We've sent Berwin up to Albany to try the governor; Scott to see property holders; so, with what Manning and I got out of him, we may be able to piece the thing together. Henderson, you've got to hustle, but you've a chance to make your reputation—a regular Billy Woods story."

The note said:

DEAR WOODS: The gang is trying to do old man Cunningham dirt. You are the only man who can save him. I'll give you the tip upon condition you handle the story for our paper, and promise not to put the old

man wise—he might give it away and spoil our beat—keep quiet about this, in any case. You'll find me at Andy's.

Yours,

H. LASCALLES.

Woods had bolted down the stairs two steps at a time.

Ten minutes later, refusing Lascalles's pressing invitation to join him in a drink, at Andy's, Billy was studying, in the light of Lascalles's meager information, every word and letter of a printed copy of the Cunningham bill.

PART III

AT THE OPERA

ONE of the brown-and-red uniformed ushers was pacing back and forth along the promenade outside the lower tier of boxes, with his usual bored expression. As he turned, he stopped and spread his arms to obtain the full benefit of the yawn he was about to indulge in. But before he had quite finished, he was interrupted by the sudden burst of muffled applause and orchestration which followed the high finishing notes of the soprano and tenor. This meant the end of the first act, and it meant that he must get busy. So, postponing his yawn for another time, he marched resolutely to his duty, which was to stand by the grand stairway and look indifferent.

With the opening of the box doors, the applause and the orchestration issued stronger, almost drowning out the conversation in the boxes. A glimpse of the brightly lighted ante-rooms of the boxes was given outsiders; here and there a table with flowers on it; ladies' wraps; men's coats; and in some cases the people themselves were coming out to make inter-box visits.

The promenade was now filled with people passing and repassing, chattering, bowing, smiling, looking at one another and in some instances even talking about the music.

"Wasn't Jean just heavenly!" exclaimed a young girl.

"Ach! more musig in my liddle finger," returned her Teutonic escort,

with long hair and glittering glasses shaking in emphasis.

"Mommer, can you stick it out?" queried an anxious daughter. And the fat mother answered desperately, "I'll try to, my dear, for your sake," but was not backed up by the father, who put in, "I'm damned if I will," and started for the stairway so abruptly that he bumped into another group of promenaders, who smoothed their ruffled feathers haughtily.

"Commuters," remarked one of these forgivingly. "Poor things! Must catch their train."

"Did you hear that!" exclaimed the indignant daughter. "Popper, come back! Mommer, you've got to stand your headache." The daughter had her way, as in many of our households, the parents being rewarded for their dutifulness in this case by a distant view of a visiting countess, arriving late and resplendent from a dinner. Nobody looked at her escort or the rest of her party, and yet they swelled with greater pride than the countess, who was more accustomed to herself.

Like the unfortunate paterfamilias who had brought upon his house the reproach of "commuter," there were others who had come here, not for music nor even for conversation. Some were here strictly for business.

"That's a Paquin model," whispered one dressmaker to another.

"Why didn't she buy hips that would fit?" was the reply. They did not even pretend to be interested in the little stage. All through the first act their opera-glasses were pointed down at the boxes, quite as if they had social aspirations.

Prima donnas and ushers are not the only ones who toil at the opera. Moving in and out among the slow-sauntering opera crowd were some of the same reporters who had paid a professional visit at Fernleigh, and a half-dozen others besides.

Shayne and Nordheimer were here, too, presumably not for the fun of it, though they looked serene and social. Shayne, in passing one of the boxes,

made a gesture which attracted Nordheimer's attention to it. They passed on, unconscious that Murphy and Munger were a little way behind, watching them interestedly.

Jerry McCarter was there, too; and with him his wife, a serious person in a remarkable costume, who thought she was walking like a woman of fashion. He was humorously conscious of his new dress suit, and humorously unconscious that it did not fit in the back. He, too, pointed out the same box, in passing, and Mrs. Jerry nodded and walked a little more like a woman of fashion, while her good man strutted and laughed at her.

Nearly all the reporters in turn applied at the door of this same interesting box. They were answered by a footman, who only shook his head and closed the door again, each time a little more emphatically.

Sauntering along from opposite directions, Lascalles and Miss Daros met, as it happened, not far from this door, each, as it chanced, idly glancing at it as they approached. He saluted and joined her in a casual manner.

"Everything all right?" she whispered to him, looking elsewhere.

"No! Billy's still out on the story, tearing all over town, working against time. Hasn't landed the general yet. Munson says he tried everything this afternoon—telephone, telegraph, bribed the servants at the house, sent in messengers—no go!"

"The general's in there."

"In the Townsend box?" Lascalles had just arrived. "The afternoon papers said the old man was sick in bed—has nervous prostration."

"But he has a daughter. He wants a son-in-law."

"Don't you worry about that," smiled Lascalles. "Tomorrow you'll have Billy and her both in a hole—different holes."

"Look out!" she whispered, and turned away quickly. Henderson, the political reporter, was approaching the Townsend box, and she knew that he suspected her. Lascalles made a sign for her to follow.

Munson, Lascalles's assistant, joined them presently.

"Where's Woods?" Lascalles demanded when they reached a secluded spot away from the crowded foyer.

"Told me to get to the devil out of his way—find me at the opera if he wanted me to run any more errands; several big guns here he's still got to bag. Say! you ought to 've seen him with the others!—bluffs 'em, jollies 'em, scares 'em—never saw such a man! Lawyers and everybody been opening up for him."

"Say, Munson," asked Lascalles, "what are all the commissioners doing here, anyway?"

"That's the beauty of it! Don't you catch on to what he's done? Saw he could never round up the whole bunch in half a day—none of 'em anxious to meet him, anyway. What did he do? Started an underground rumor that threw a scare into Shayne and Nordheimer; they've come to keep an eye on the general, Murphy and Munger to watch *them*—so he has everybody here watching everybody else! Isn't it lovely?"

"Nobody but Billy could have done that," commented Miss Daros.

"Huh! But if he can't clinch the story by means of the general's side of it," put in Lascalles, less enthusiastically, "where do we stand with Shayne?"

Munson said, "Well, anyhow, you can at least threaten to tell what you overheard that night up at Fernleigh."

"And how much did I overhear?" asked Lascalles sarcastically.

"It's such a little thing—they'll never discover it," repeated Munson glibly, "and 'the old man's no proof-reader!' Just say that to 'em and see 'em jump!"

"But what does *that* mean?"

"It might mean—anything!"

"Yes—or nothing," put in Miss Daros.

"And that's exactly what they told me," remarked Lascalles, grinning, to the young woman.

"You tried it!" Munson exclaimed.

"Yesterday, when we gave up Woods for lost—and got kicked out of the place for it, threatened with a suit for blackmail."

"Only bluffing," said Munson sententiously. "They'll pay a good, stiff price all right, to keep what evidence Woods has got by this time out of the paper."

"But, can't you see," exclaimed the scornful Lascalles, "they'll pay a hundred times more to keep themselves out of Sing Sing! Don't you understand—if Billy can only get *proof* of criminal intent—and we hold it up before their eyes—in black and white! Why, man alive, we've got 'em where we can get anything, anything!"

"Billy may be able to work the general," put in Miss Daros, "but how are you going to work *him*? Remember, he is as quick as a steel trap to catch onto anything crooked!"

"Not when he's writing a big story," said Lascalles.

"He's dead to the world then," concurred Munson. "You've seen him yourself, Miss Daros."

"But there's your night editor," objected Miss Daros, "one of the keenest and straightest men in New York."

Lascalles laughed. "Doesn't even know Woods has joined us! Billy was so anxious to get busy, he didn't stop to come up to the office. He'll write his story in my private office. What did I rent a private office for, anyway!"

"And afterward?" asked the girl.

"That's a cinch," said Munson.

"But how are you going to work it?" Miss Daros was insistent.

"Oh, there are a dozen ways," said Lascalles easily. "Something unpleasant, if necessary."

Miss Daros was startled.

"Only until tomorrow when the bill gets through, you understand."

Miss Daros was thinking about it. "But, when he wakes up?" she asked. "We'll be sailing down the Bay on the *Cedric*."

"And Billy?" Miss Daros said.

Lascalles misunderstood her hesitation. "Do you think anybody's going

to believe his explanation?" he asked. "The evidence will be dead against him."

"If I know Woods," remarked Munson, "he'll skip out and never peep!"

"What difference does it make to us," put in Lascalles, who was less speculative. "We'll be out of reach—if we only get the whole story." He turned away impatiently. "Now then," he said, "it's up to me to connect with Shayne. You keep your eye on the Townsend box, Munson; get in touch with Woods." They separated. Lascalles was the only one of the three playing coldly for money. Munson could not forget the adventure of it. And the woman in the case was there with what brings women into most cases, sometimes to the upsetting of well-laid plans.

The bell had rung, the passing crowd had disappeared, the box doors had slammed, the music had begun again and the usher had his yawn.

II

MEANWHILE Henderson, who was approaching the Townsend box when Miss Daros spied him, had turned away from it again at seeing one of the other reporters there handing in a note which was straightway handed back, unopened. This struck the young reporter who made the attempt as eminently right and reasonable, and he fled the place hating himself and everybody in sight. That night he wrote home that he had decided to give up his literary ambitions and would study law, as his father wanted him to do.

That was not the way Henderson looked at the matter. He had been in the business many years. When such disagreeable contingencies arose—which was not often—he met them quite impersonally.

Now, Henderson had in his pocket the proof of an editorial which it was very important to bring to the attention of General Cunningham. It was impersonally important from the

point of view of a dealer in news. It was still more important personally, from the point of view of General Cunningham, whose political moves had more than once been questioned. Henderson proposed to give the irascible old gentleman a chance to state his side of the present question.

So he turned away, planning how to work it, and presently came back with an inspiration and the brown and red uniformed usher. The latter was aroused into wakefulness by no greater noise than the crinkling sound of a crisp dollar bill. Henderson then handed him the long proof-sheet, folded and superscribed with a brief request for instructions as to the general's pleasure in the matter. The usher went in and Henderson awaited results. They came quickly.

The door was opened by the fast-fatiguing footman, and Gilbert Townsend appeared. He was furious and showed it by hurling the proof, doubled up into a wad, at Henderson's feet. Then, threatening the usher with the loss of his position, Gilbert retired without another glance at the reporter and the door closed and clicked with quiet eloquence.

While this was going on, still another reporter appeared, walking in a hurry. It was Woods, carrying a raincoat over his arm, and quite oblivious of his surroundings. He first had meant to make a preliminary survey of the field to see how many of those he wanted were here. He caught a view of Henderson in the act of sending in the proofsheets by the usher.

It made him stop abruptly, with a gesture of annoyance, for he knew it would not work and would only make his own task more difficult. So, without stopping to see it fail, he dashed on after a tall, ascetic-looking man, with a bald head, catching him just as he was about to enter another box.

"Judge Lansing," he said, disarming hostility with a smile, a shrug and a shake of the head, "it's simply criminal to bother you here, but I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to talk shop a moment—about a certain decision of

yours in '92." Woods knew, or rather felt, that the judge was the sort who responded best to what Billy's friends termed a "refined, ingénue manner." It was hardly premeditated, however; there was not time for premeditation. Pacing to the end of the promenade and the back, Billy got some, if not all, of what he wanted, and thanking the scholarly personage at the latter's box door—he went on.

The important part of the work was still to be performed, and there was not much time left for it. He had been obliged to consume two valuable hours of his time at the start, in finding a starting point. All he had to go on was a not very definitely suggestive sentence or two from an overheard conversation—plus the conviction, which he had already formed, that there was a nigger in the woodpile somewhere. He might never have stumbled upon the theory that he was now working on confidently, though blindly, if there had not flashed into his mind a "story" telegraphed to the papers some time before, from a Western State capitol. It was to the effect that a murderer's life was spared owing to a typographical error. A little investigation and his layman's knowledge of the law showed him what he was hunting for in the general's bill. But it was one thing to be morally certain, and another to adduce proof, and the evening was no longer young.

Woods had just arrived and Judge Lansing was the first man he had seen. He then hurried around the block to the stage entrance, familiarly saluted his old friend, the doorkeeper, and soon found his way past drops and gauzes, under the stage, with its many ropes, wires, cogwheels and trap-doors, to where the electrician sat on a high stool like a bicycle seat. It was in a place like a rifle pit, with a switchboard bigger than a grand piano.

"Hello, Billy," he whispered. "What can I do for you?"

"I only want to see how the audience looks from here," said Woods, adjusting a pair of binoculars, borrowed on

the way. He located the various faces in half the time it would have taken to find them otherwise. He found that his audacious ruse, born of desperation, had succeeded in what he had hoped for, namely, in bringing most of them together where he could get at them; but whether or not it would be of any avail was another question. Woods went back to the foyer once more.

III

THE venerable ex-secretary was in no mood for enjoying the music or the other noises of the opera, but he scarcely heard them. Everything outside of his troubled mind was like the unimportant buzzing of persistent flies to a fever patient. Indeed, it was contrary to his physician's first advice that the engagement to attend this benefit with the Townsends was not broken. When the nerve specialist saw how determined the old gentleman was to carry out the plan, however, he humored him, saying that the music and the people might divert his mind from worry, knowing that his patient would not be able, in any case, to take the rest he prescribed for him until sea air and change of scene had produced their effect; if, that is, the general could be persuaded to sail at all, for he now seemed inclined to postpone his start indefinitely. This, Dr. Strange declared to Mrs. Metcalfe and the general's daughter, might produce serious results.

All afternoon, contrary to newspaper reports, the harassed old gentleman had been in consultation with his lawyers and advisers. He had held long-distance conversations by telephone with the governor. He had sought telegraphic advice from certain high authorities at Washington. All to no purpose. And now he was sitting bolt upright in the Townsend box, staring straight ahead of him at nothing, while his daughter, who would not leave his side, watched his face anxiously, which was not what he had come there for.

More than once he begged her to join the others in the front of the box and enjoy the evening as young people should. But even Mrs. Metcalfe's adroit maneuvering could not effect this. At last, soon after the beginning of the second act, the anxious aunt, in desperation, simulated the symptoms of giddiness and beckoned Frances and Gilbert to accompany her out into the promenade for a breath of fresh air which she said would refresh her in a moment.

Despatching Gilbert to the nearest drug-store for a certain powder that would cure her headache, she put the case plainly to her young, unworldly niece. There was no time now to mince matters and she tried, as kindly as she could, to make the thoughtless girl see the danger of her persistently inconsiderate treatment of Gilbert.

"Very few men," she reminded her, "would put up with the snubs you have accorded him during the last few days, and especially this afternoon and this evening."

"Don't ask me to think about Gilbert now," begged Frances, "with father in there looking like that."

"My dear child, why is he here?" Mrs. Metcalfe exclaimed, exasperated at the girl's stubbornness. "Why did he make you read that last telegram from the governor? Don't you understand? Can't you see! When this dreadful bill goes through it may be too late. Your father's name may be smirched. Think of it! Think of the uproar! Think of the effect upon Gilbert! To put it plainly, my little niece, unless your engagement is announced this evening, as your father and I had arranged—don't you see?"

"But there is nothing to announce."

"Your father believes it's only a lover's quarrel—didn't you ask Gilbert to sail with you tomorrow?"

"But, can't you see, aunty, during the past two awful weeks—how could I burden his mind with my little troubles?" Then, impetuously turning to the box, she exclaimed: "Oh, I'll explain the whole thing now and have it over with."

Mrs. Metcalfe restrained her. "Wait," she said warningly. "Remember what Dr. Strange said about his heart. Any sudden shock tonight—Frances, it would never do!"

"Then tell me what I can do," cried the girl.

"Be nice to Gilbert. Here he comes." And, turning to him, she said in her normal tone again: "Thank you, dear Gilbert. I'm quite myself again." And added significantly: "So is Frances. Aren't you, my dear? We've both been so distressed about the general." Which reminded her that it was time to go back to him. And, slipping quickly into the box, she left the two young people together.

They were not very much at ease in each other's presence. Gilbert had done all in his power to be of aid and sympathy to her father and she had hardly treated him civilly. He had given up most of his time during the past two weeks and many important engagements in order to be of service to the old gentleman, even when unaccompanied by his daughter. And, for thanks, she was making a fool of him. He was willing to make a great many sacrifices for her sake, but he naturally felt hurt that she should take it all so complacently, and express her appreciation by snubbing him publicly. Of course, he had no mind to reproach her with this, but if anything were to be said to break the awkward silence as they hesitated by the door, it was clearly not his part to make the first advance. Moreover, if he were to do so, it would only be received with the heartless inconsiderateness which had marked her attitude all through the afternoon since saying good-bye with such unnecessary effusiveness to his cousin at the conclusion of that unpleasant scene which he had done all in his power to prevent, at the newspaper office. Gilbert maintained a polite reserve, smiling at her, not unkindly.

Frances, feeling the silence, and seeing that nothing was coming of her resolution to be nice, turned with a sudden impulse to the door of the box.

"May I ask why you are going?" submitted Gilbert urbanely.

"To join the others," she replied with matter-of-factness.

He bowed and held the door open for her. Then, without following, he bowed once more and said gravely: "I shall 'join the others' later."

"Where are you going?" she inquired, smiling to soften the stiffness of their mutual attitude, which impressed her as being rather absurd.

"Oh, I'm merely going to cancel my state-room. It will take only a moment by telephone."

Frances came out of the anteroom quickly. "No, no, no!" she cried excitedly. "Don't, Gilbert. Please don't do that." She caught him by the arm.

The eager change in her manner misled him. She was very young and she hardly knew her own mind. But perhaps her heart knew its desires, even when she did not. The imminence of that year without him betrayed her true feelings. He ventured to inquire, with delicate circumlocution, whether he might flatter himself that such was the case.

It would have been an easy thing to say, "Come and see." If it had been merely the duel of sex, with the desire to bring another man to her feet, she might have been tempted to say something of the sort. But, in this case, it was so different that the thought revolted her. "'Fraid it isn't that exactly, Gilbert," she said, with more embarrassment than he had ever seen in her manner before. "Father thinks so, though," she added, with a little laugh to hide her nervousness, which her twisting fingers uncovered. "I was just thinking, couldn't we—just for a little longer—let him keep on thinking so?—till this nightmare is over. Would that be asking too much, Gilbert?"

Gilbert only stared at her in astonishment. "Dear old father," she went on, in distress, "you know how harassed he is already. Only till he's rested up on the steamer? Would you mind very much?"

Gilbert's jaw was set. "Oh, I know it isn't fair to you," she went on. "I don't know what you will think of me for asking it. But don't you see—oh, I'm in a dreadful fix!" she broke out, childlike. "You see, I gave father a wrong impression about us up at Fernleigh. I'm afraid you helped do it yourself, Gilbert, unintentionally. And now, you see, Dr. Strange said this afternoon that any sudden shock—Oh, Gilbert, do help me out! Just be generous and sail with us tomorrow."

No one could accuse him of lacking in generosity. But though he daily received demands upon it, of many varieties, this was a kind of generosity he had never been obliged to consider. And, he thought, any man would hesitate to accede to such an unreasonable request under the peculiar circumstances and coming, as it did, upon the sudden toppling of high hope. The thoughtless beauty clearly did not recognize what she was asking. But Gilbert did not refuse point blank, as some men might have done.

"That," he replied, temporizing, "would be equivalent to announcing we're engaged. All our friends think so already, you know."

"But if you come back alone," began the girl naively, and Gilbert interrupted, "To announcing that I am thrown over."

"Well, you'd do even that for father—and me, wouldn't you?" she asked, with girlish faith. For had he not declared again and again that he would make any sacrifice for her sake?

Gilbert had already suffered much by her capriciousness. He had a vision of what people would say—how some men and women he hated would laugh at him behind his back; how certain scurrilous journals would comment upon the futility of his infatuation, somewhat as they had impudently done before in regard to his movements in other matters. He was a personage, a man prominent in the public eye, and he had more dignity to maintain than most men of his age.

She was pleading with him, holding out the beautiful hands in her un-

conscious earnestness. "Oh, Gilbert—please! I can't promise anything. That wouldn't be right. You wouldn't want me to until I care for you enough, would you? But, if you will only come—" Something made her stop abruptly, and she added, modulating the new tone in her voice, unsuccessfully: "Perhaps you're right, after all, Gilbert. It is a good deal to ask of you—to ask of any man," she added, as if fearing she had accented the pronoun. "Go and cancel your steamer."

Gilbert, who had been scowling at the floor, looked up quickly at her sudden change, and, following the direction of her gaze, he saw approaching from the stairway his cousin, the reporter, in jovial conversation with Jerry McCarter.

"No," said Gilbert. "I have made my decision. I will sail with you in the morning." As he spoke, he opened the box door, and there was nothing for her to do but to pass in as he bowed with courtly grace.

IV

Woods, adapting himself as usual to the person in hand, was saying in a laughing voice, as if without a care in the world, and as if he had all evening to gossip in: "Well, those were great old days, Jerry. And do you remember when you got that first saloon of your own over on Avenue A? Used to pull off fights in the room upstairs."

"Called it an athletic club, Billy," chuckled McCarter, with a dig in his young friend's ribs, who, he did not notice, was glancing here and there, and scowled as they approached the Townsend box. "Athletic club! Didn't cut much ice when we got pulled by the Reform administration!" The jovial McCarter laughed heartily at the recollection. "Say! Wouldn't it jar these real things here if they knew!" he added, with a humorous glance at his dress suit.

"What do you think you're doing here anyway?" inquired Woods banteringly.

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McCarter made answer: "The auld woman—she's after buttin' into sassiety—wants me to introduce her to me mash, Mrs. Metcalfe." He pointed at the Townsend box, interrupting himself with a snort of laughter. "A fine woman, that, Billy, for all she's so hoity-toity; though 'Oi'm thinkin' Oi loike the young one better. And so do you, eh? Oh, Oi had me eye on ye up there at our sworay. Say what d'ye think of me dress suit, Billy?"

"Beauty," said Woods, glancing at his watch. "Why don't you buy one?"

"Ah, g'wan!" laughed McCarter, and gave his smiling companion a playful push. "Don't ye be puttin' that in the paper now, moind."

"Huh!" interjected Woods, suddenly serious. "That shows I was right. *Thought* they hadn't let you in on it."

"In on what?" McCarter was impressed by his young friend's tone, and stopped.

"Well," said Woods, smiling thoughtfully, "there is something I *am* going to put in the paper, Jerry." He looked at McCarter frankly. "Something those higher up won't like."

"Ain't they been on the level wid me?" Jerry exclaimed. "What's doin', Billy? What's doin'?"

"Suppose you tell me first, what made you and Murphy so hot for the Cunningham bill."

McCarter hesitated. "Say, me bye, ye nivver went back on a frind yit."

"What's in it for you fellows?" said Woods.

"Well now, it was loike this," Jerry began as they walked on. "One day, Jake Shayne he says to me one day, 'Jerry,' says he, 'you want that bye of yours on the po-lice,' says he. 'Sure,' says I; 'it's the way ye began yerself,' I says. 'Well,' says he, 'I guess I can fix it for ye if ye back th' giniral an' his bill,' he says."

Once started, McCarter talked freely, for he knew it was the safest thing to do with Woods.

Meanwhile there were others in the great building who were neglecting their musical opportunities. Shayne

and Nordheimer, to escape the reporters, had slipped across the street for a quiet talk in one of the back rooms of Kid McCoy's café. They had been followed there by Lascalles, and now, having rid themselves of his unwelcome company, came back to the opera somewhat excitedly.

"Don't worry about him—he's a loafer," said Shayne, relapsing into the vernacular in his excitement.

"But he says——"

"Tell him if he opens his head again he'll be up against a suit for blackmail."

"Don't you think he knows anything?" asked Nordheimer.

"Nothing he can make any use of," returned Shayne with confidence. "Simplicity of the thing is what blinds 'em all." They had stopped and were hovering near the Townsend box—perhaps because of the hint they had received during the afternoon that something would be "doing" this evening; perhaps because of a similar fascination to that which murderers are said to feel.

In any case, Nordheimer, less experienced than his pal, and less courageous by nature, was frightened.

Shayne laughed at him. "Brace up," he said, slapping him on the back. "Only a few hours more, old man."

"Hours!" returned Nordheimer. "Seems more like years. Haven't slept for a week."

Shayne, staring straight ahead of him, stopped abruptly and ejaculated: "Hell!"

"What?" asked Nordheimer.

"Woods!" whispered Shayne.

Nordheimer was for turning in the opposite direction. Shayne restrained him. "Don't give yourself away," he sneered. "Bluff it out! You're not afraid of a reporter." And they sauntered on casually.

Woods, walking briskly, came forward toward them, with his head down as if not aware of their presence until quite near them, when, suddenly shooting an accusing finger into Nordheimer's face, he cried in a voice

that seemed horribly loud to them: "Who took out that comma?"

Both men made reply at once. "'Sh! What comma?" said Shayne. "General Cunningham!" said Nordheimer, and Shayne added, "What are you talking about, anyway?"

"Too late," said Woods, laughing at Shayne and pointing at Nordheimer, who in panic had stepped back from his strident accuser. Shayne, with the quick instincts of bluffing, stepped forward boldly, saying, "If there has been a typographical error——"

"Thank you, Mr. Nordheimer," remarked Woods, stepping between them. "That proves my theory, Mr. Shayne. Been working on it rather blindly heretofore."

With contemptuous indignation, Shayne demanded the meaning of all this nonsense, making signs to Nordheimer, meanwhile, to brace up. Nordheimer, emulating his chief's manner, not very successfully, said: "What are you talking about?"

"About an old forgotten statute," returned Woods, again, with such sudden fierceness that Nordheimer once more showed signs of quaking. "See," said Woods, smiling at Shayne, "even he knows, and he's only an ignorant whisky dealer." As he spoke, the young man took out pencil and paper. "Now then," he said in a brisk, businesslike manner, "I'll give you fellows a fair shake. Write down verbatim any statement you——"

"It's no use," said Shayne to Nordheimer, in a confidential manner. "Can't shield the old gentleman any longer."

Woods smiled. "So that's it, eh? All right. Go on. That makes it all the more interesting." He pretended to take notes. Nordheimer looked at Shayne.

"General Cunningham wrote that bill," said Shayne.

Woods, still calmly taking notes, remarked quietly, "Um h'm. And you kindly attended to the printing for him."

"He O.K.'d it as it stands today," returned Shayne, with still more force.

And Nordheimer put in excitedly: "We've got his own signature to the proof-sheets."

"A clever precaution," said the reporter.

"See here, young man," returned Shayne, who had done much quick thinking, and now spoke in the superior manner of a lawyer: "We can get affidavits from the printer showing——"

"All right. All right," interrupted Woods wearily, waving his lead pencil. "I know. I've seen the printers, of course. Quigley set up the job—had a long talk with him this afternoon. But," Woods went on, mocking Shayne's legal manner, "you cannot get affidavits to show that General Cunningham wrote that bill with the comma omitted from the third sentence of the second paragraph of section VII!"

"And we don't have to!" returned Shayne triumphantly. "Let him prove he didn't!" And with that the lawyer calmly turned away, Nordheimer following, somewhat dazed by the sudden reversal of the situation.

Woods saw the significance of the remark at once, and for an instant was too staggered to pursue. He stood staring at their retreating backs, cursing himself for showing how weak in trumps his hand was. He let them go on. The only thing to do was to get the original draft. Unless that had been preserved, no power on earth could clear the name of General Cunningham.

Even if Woods refused to write a word of the evidence he had secured, matters had progressed too far by this time to be stopped. His talk with Judge Lansing, his interview with the mayor about the various hearings in that official's office, his examination into various records, his telegraphed and telephoned inquiries at Albany—it would all seem, after the facts came out, as if he had suppressed the evidence out of consideration for the general, which would only incriminate the latter more deeply. All depended on the original draft, and that he must now get at any cost.

V

As he paced up and down before the Townsend box, wasting a few precious seconds in indecision as to the best means of going about the delicate undertaking, it happened that Shayne was applying his sharp wits to the accomplishment of the same end. "We've got to get that original draft," he whispered to Nordheimer, as they started down the stairs. "If we don't, where are we?"

They had tried to "borrow" it a dozen times from the old gentleman, but had succeeded only in discovering that he kept it locked in his private safe. There was no time for formalities now.

"Nordheimer," whispered Shayne, "go put Slim Burke on the job, quick! If he don't get it in my hands tonight, tell him I'll show him up. Tell him it'll mean twenty years' hard labor for him this time. Wait a minute, Nordheimer. Do you realize that if we don't get it—it means twenty years for us!"

Nordheimer, fleeing in terror, passed on the staircase the man Lascalles, followed at a little distance by Miss Daros; Lascalles made for Shayne. "Don't you think you'd like to have a little talk with me, after all?" he asked, with his insinuating smile. Miss Daros had been hovering near the Townsend box all evening, had witnessed the meeting, and had hurried after Lascalles.

"That man on your paper?" Shayne asked, seeing a sudden ray of hope.

Lascalles nodded, impudently calm.

"But I know Woods," added Shayne, shaking his head and feeling inward alarm once more.

Lascalles raised his eyebrows. "Every man has his price," he said in his oily way. "Woods is a high-priced man, I admit, but——"

"You're a liar," interrupted Shayne. "I've tried to fix him before."

As they talked, they had drawn near the subject of their conversation, who was shaking his head abstractedly as he tore up a visiting-card on which

he had scribbled a few words. He knew the futility of that.

"Oh, Billy," inquired Lascalles, calmly. "Are you working for us or not?"

Woods waved him aside impatiently. "Yes, yes. Don't bother me now."

Lascalles whispered to Shayne: "Wants me to take care of this end of the job, you see."

For answer, Shayne took Lascalles by the arm. "Let's go across to the Kid's," he said.

And now Woods, with a sudden resolution, biting his lips, quietly opened the door of the box and called in a low, earnest tone: "General Cunningham, quick! I can block the bill for you."

At first there was no reply except the incongruous one of the music and the low babble of voices pouring out through the open door. He had not been heard except by the footman who turned, scandalized, as if to put the intruder out. Woods called again. This time it was loud enough to be heard by all in the box. Some of those in neighboring boxes turned and looked. Gilbert flew out, blazing with indignation. "Say, Gil, quick! tell him— Oh, I'm awfully sorry, of course. But, quick! I've solved the mystery!"

"See here! Are you drunk? Don't you realize where you are?"

"But can't you realize I've got the whole story! Quick! Call him or I will!"

"He's a sick man already."

"I'm here to cure him."

"All because you damned reporters—"

"Are you going to bring him out, or must I?"

Gilbert, with sudden fury, shoved him back and slammed the door. He had been taken unawares. He now threw himself against the door with all his force. Gilbert had not time to turn the latch. The door burst open. Gilbert, assisted by the footman, pushed it back again. Woods blocked it with his foot. Now he was desperate. He shouted through the crack in a loud tone: "General, quick! I've

discovered the whole plot!" Those in the nearby boxes thought it must be a crank or an intoxicated person, but they saw the general disappear quickly into the anteroom. "What's this? What's this?" he whispered excitedly.

"A trick to get you out," returned Gilbert, still struggling at the door. "Go back, sir."

"The original draft! Where is it?" came in Woods's voice through the crack.

"Come on, father," said another voice within. Frances had followed. "Will you let us pass?" Gilbert gave way reluctantly.

All three now joined the reporter in the promenade, Gilbert closing the door to prevent further disgraceful disturbance. It would be hard enough to explain what had happened already.

VI

"YOUNG man, what's all this ado about a plot?" asked the general, half suspicious.

"Where is the draft, sir?"

They were all excited, Gilbert the most so. "He says he can block the bill already. Why don't you go and do it, then? Frances, this is no place for you." But the girl declined to go in.

"Because," answered Woods, "until I clinch my evidence with that draft—"

"Told you so—a trick. Come on back, sir."

"What is the plot, Billy?" This from Frances.

"Make haste, sir!" from the general.

"I can't tell you that—at least not now. But if you'll only let me have that draft until tomorrow—"

"Can't tell me!"

"Can't tell the author of the bill, eh?" Gilbert joined in.

"Why not, Billy?" added the one sympathetic voice.

Woods was panting. "But I only got the tip by promising—" He stopped. It would never do to mention Lascalles's name to the general.

"Yes?"

"—by a promise that I wouldn't tell you, sir."

"Bah!" sneered Gilbert.

"Why not, Billy? Explain!"

"Because, don't you see, in his excitement he might let the cat out of the bag—telephone the whole story up to the governor, and then——"

"Well, wouldn't that kill the bill?" interpolated Gilbert ironically.

"But can't you see, it would also kill the story!"

"Oh, we see that," said Gilbert. "A 'big story'! The news of course is more important."

"News, as it happens," returned the reporter, "is the commodity in which newspapers deal. Astonishing fact, isn't it?" Then, turning from Gilbert to the general: "I offered you my services today. I'm working for a newspaper now. It's the only way I could do it. If you'll give me that draft I'll kill your bill. You've got to trust somebody. Why not trust me?"

Again the girl put in to her father, who was hesitating: "Yes, father. Do take my advice."

"He did once today," muttered Gilbert.

"I can't wait here all night, sir," cried Woods in desperation. "For the last time, do you want me to show up those rascals? Smash your bill? Save your name? Or——"

"The last chance," whispered Frances.

Gilbert took the general's arm. "Why is he so anxious to save your name?—panting with excitement to save your name?"

The tortured reporter could stand it no longer. He was in a state where the ordinary reserves are transcended. "Because, if you must know my reasons," he burst out impetuously to the general, "if you can't believe in me otherwise"—he turned his excited eyes toward Frances; but the girl, who was looking at him imploringly, put her finger to her lips and shook her head. Woods bowed to her behest. "Because this is the legitimate pursuit of my profession."

The general turned away in disgust. "There is nothing legitimate about the profession you pursue." And then he started at beholding the approach of half a dozen other members of the same illegitimate profession.

"Billy's got him," one of these was saying. Perhaps the news of the flutter in the Townsend box had spread, or certain observant eyes had detected the absence of the general's silvery head. At any rate, here they were, swooping down upon him like vultures.

"Come in, sir, quick!" whispered Gilbert.

But the general had another plan. "I must telephone to the governor about this," he said.

Henderson, in the vanguard of the reporters, was taking out his much-folded, rumpled and smudgy proof. "All I want to know, sir," he began considerably, and then they surrounded him, despite his silent gesticulations. Gilbert had started with him, but stopped at seeing his cousin draw near Frances. "Go with father," she whispered to Gilbert. "I can't."

"Go back to the box. You must," he returned, as though he meant to make a bargain of it. She opened the door and disappeared within, but as she did so, heard Billy, as he passed by apparently intent on something in the other direction: "As you value your father's life, let me see you."

"Can't you take 'no' for an answer?" Gilbert was demanding of the rapacious reporters.

"But, general," Henderson was persisting, "if you don't deny——"

"Nothing to say. Nothing to say," repeated the general, until Gilbert got him safely into an automobile and whisked him off to the Bar Association near by, where the old man could telephone to his heart's content.

VII

FRANCES had gone only as far as the anteroom of the box and as soon as she knew Gilbert was out of sight, reappeared alone in the promenade,

as Billy had believed she would. He was more intense than ever now, because the time was shorter and his case more desperate. There were no preliminaries. He almost sprang at her. "The draft—where is it?"

"In his pocket."

"Good work."

"A mysterious note this afternoon—"

"Yes, yes—"

"—warning him—"

"I know—I wrote it. Now, then—"

"You!" He was too intent to notice the recoil.

"To make him bring the draft here," Woods threw in. "Now listen—"

"An anonymous note?"

"Great heavens! Do you think this is much fun for me, prying in where I'm not wanted, writing anonymous notes, getting snubbed, treated like a dog! Why do you think I'm doing it, anyway!"

She had no reply to make to that. He had no time to wait for an answer.

"And now—worst of all—I've got to drag you in." He paused and then said, more slowly, "Will you get me that draft?"

She looked at him quickly. "You wouldn't ask me to take it, Billy?"

"I don't know how you'll get it. But get it! We've simply got to save your father in spite of himself. Will you get me that draft?"

She hesitated. He looked at his watch again, then at her quivering face. "Don't," he cried, with a throb in his voice. "Don't look at me like that! You want me to give up now, on the brink of success? What's that piece of paper to me! What do I care about the public's opinion of your father!" Billy snapped his fingers. "But your opinion of me!" There was something like reverence in his tone, which made her heart swell. "Don't you know why I'm doing all this?" he went on, the love note in his voice, ringing and rushing out to her. "Can't you see why I'm working as no poor devil of a reporter ever worked before? Oh, Frances, Fran-

ces, you must at least believe in me! You must! You must! Why, for the woman I love I would lie, I would steal, I would kill, and go through hell, with only the reward of knowing 'it was for her dear sake.' That, nobody could take from me. That—it would be mine for ever and ever! Will you believe in me? Will you trust me? Will you do as I ask?"

She was suffusingly conscious of being swept from her moorings, carried up and away on the wave of his wonderful words. Impulsively she put both of her girlish hands in his great capable ones. "Yes," she whispered—"even if I have to take it."

"Then you *do* understand!"

"No. But I love you, Billy."

The box door opened. Mrs. Metcalfe had become anxious at the long absence of those she was already so concerned about.

"I wondered what had become of you," she began, and then caught sight of the reporter. Her sudden presence, like her normal conventional voice, was as jarring as a collision in mid-ocean. The man was the first to recover his balance.

"It all rests with you now," he muttered, and walked away.

Mrs. Metcalfe turned to her niece. "Reporting at the opera!" was all she said, but not what she thought.

Frances sought to divert her by a flood of sentences, telling what had become of her father and Gilbert. But, as she began, Gilbert returned, alone. "Why, where's father?" she asked.

Gilbert had passed Woods on the stairway, and guessed where he came from. "Something to tell you about that fellow," he said, with a gesture toward the stairway.

"Where's father?"

"Telephoning—my automobile—reporters wouldn't let him alone."

"Why didn't you stay with him?"

"You need protection more."

Miss Daros, having been sent again by Lascalles to see how the land lay, had stopped by a pillar at a safe distance on seeing Frances and Woods

together. Fearing discovery, she had not dared to approach near enough to hear their words, but she had witnessed the climax of their interview. She now drew near, following Gilbert, as if her destination lay farther around the horseshoe.

She was observed of Mrs. Metcalfe, and gave that lady an inspiration. "May I speak to you a moment, Miss Daros?" asked Mrs. Metcalfe, leading her apart. The time had come for decisive action.

Gilbert, meanwhile, was talking earnestly with Frances. "You think he's working for your father. I wouldn't poison your mind against an innocent person for the world, no matter who or what he might be." Gilbert was overwrought. "But I consider it no more than my duty to tell you that this man, who you have informed me is so nobly desirous of helping your father out of this appalling difficulty, without any hope of reward of any kind—I think I quote your words correctly—this man is in the employ of one Lascalles!"

"The man who killed father's political career? Nonsense! I don't believe you."

"Ask any of the reporters. You seem given to believing reporters. It's all they're talking about this evening."

Frances smiled, confidently, which impelled him to say more than he had perhaps intended. "He has been off on a drunk for two weeks, they say; ever since that night at Fernleigh."

The girl spurned the thought of vouchsafing any reply further than the same confident smile, now becoming scornful.

"He's been drinking downstairs all evening, too. Your father and I wondered what was the matter with him. That explains it."

This produced a shrug of girlish shoulders. The disgust was not for the subject of the tale, but the bearer of it. In a silence which proclaimed to his delicate sensibilities how she regarded him—more forcibly than any

words she might have employed—the girl moved over toward the other pair, as if unable to endure his proximity longer.

"Frank!" he cried, running after her, "you don't understand. It was only because I considered it my duty to show you that fellow's real character!"

"You have shown me yours!" She said it with the mature dignity that had astounded and fascinated him that night at Fernleigh.

Mrs. Metcalfe was handing back to the young woman reporter a pencil and a slip of paper. "There!" Frances heard her say; "put it that way."

"When shall I say the wedding takes place?" asked Miss Daros.

"There is to be no wedding!" Frances snatched the paper out of Miss Daros's hand. "The report is unfounded." She tore it to shreds.

The girl shot a look of indignation at Gilbert, who shrugged his shoulders as one would say: "It was not my doing." But he refrained from saying so, out of consideration for Mrs. Metcalfe, now quite speechless in her consternation.

There was a momentary silence, all four busy with their different emotions. Smoldering hate and jealousy had blazed up in the dark face of the Russian-Jewess, unseen by the others. Frances had turned her back upon them to hide her struggle to hold back the tears. Mrs. Metcalfe, the first to recover poise, laid hold of Gilbert. He seemed inclined to return to the box. His absence could not be indefinitely accounted for on the score of the general's condition. Catastrophe was impending.

"Mere girlish caprice," the old campaigner whispered cajolingly. "She will come to her senses once you get her safely away. These strange fascinations! Remember Helen Truesdale and her handsome riding-master?" She continued in this vein.

Miss Daros, meanwhile, stole near Frances, hesitated a moment, looking at the pretty, quaking shoulders, wondering at the strange ways of

strong men who chose to risk all for the smile of brainless little dolls, ignoring the existence of those intellectually capable of appreciating them.

The rather noble beauty of the exquisite child, standing eloquently erect and making such pathetically futile attempts to stay the tears, helped to madden the other woman. This slender hothouse product of civilization already possessed everything the other lacked—beauty, wealth, home, family, position in the world; it was intolerable that she should also take, with the complacent arrogance of youthful prettiness, the heart of the man she herself had waited for so long. Class hatred only fanned the flame of consuming fury; elemental passion brought it to the white heat which blinded her to actions which would seem unnatural to those with less passionate natures.

"You will pardon me, I know, Miss Cunningham," she whispered, simulating deprecatory friendliness, "but you have always been so good to me."

Frances tried to wave her aside. "Please—I can't talk to you just now."

Miss Daros persisted: "This newspaper man, Mr. Woods—"

Frances shook her head and moved away. Miss Daros pursued. "I owe it to you to tell you— Oh, it is so hard to tell."

"I do not care to hear, Miss Daros."

"You must not believe what he says to you—"

"Miss Daros! Stop!"

"He says the same things to me!"

"To you! It's a lie! You know it!" Frances had always admired Miss Daros. She had ideas. The scorn in her tone was for the imputation of Billy's duplicity. Miss Daros took it as scorn for one in a humble position. She felt the impotent rage of a plain woman in the presence of beauty preferred.

The dignity of the younger girl mocked her lack of it. The implicit trust made her desperate and degraded.

"Why did he take me out of the sweatshop?" she sneered, pursuing the girl who ran toward the others, calling

for protection. "Why did he have me advanced in the office?" she kept on. "You thought it was because you asked him to do so!"

"Gilbert, can't you send her away!"

Townsend, nonplussed, was trying to.

"You're too easy!" The woman laughed back at Frances. "It was for your sake he gave me this, I suppose, and this!" She indicated a ring and pin at her throat. And before Gilbert could get her out of hearing, she added, repulsively, almost shouting the words back at them: "Don't suppose you believe he's drinking this evening, either. Well, just smell his breath."

The general returning, well nigh in a state of collapse, absorbed the attention of all three.

"The governor cut off the connection," was all he would vouchsafe them. Gilbert had run to his support. The ladies were beseeching him to think no more about the matter at present, which was easy to say. They calmed him as best they could, and now, at last, they returned to the box.

"Father, you still have the draft safe?" the girl asked, as they passed in.

The general, nodding abstractedly as he took off his overcoat, pointed to the precious document protruding from the inside pocket of the garment.

"May I see it?" she asked, holding out her hand.

The general summoned a paternal smile. "Why trouble your little head over it?" he said in refusal. Then the door closed and they joined the others with such excuses as seemed fit. Frances remained in the back part of the box, to hide the signs of her recent agitation, Gilbert supposed, who was doing his best among the others to smooth over the unusual incident by smiles and whispered comments on the music.

VIII

Woods, by the street entrance, had witnessed the general's return, keeping carefully out of sight, and restraining,

with greater difficulty, his nervous impatience. Inaction was the only thing that he could not stand at such times. It almost unnerved him.

He now drew near the box door, glancing once more at his watch, and hoping against hope that in some way the one lacking, all-important link would yet be placed in his hands. The whole weight of his carefully-gathered mass of evidence would fall to the ground without it. But, if he obtained it now, there would be just time, by writing at the furious speed of which he was capable, to rush the completed story through before the paper went to press. Would she find it possible? Would she dare? Was she ever coming out? Valuable seconds were passing, while he waited, tortured by suspense. He heard a voice speaking his name. He turned and saw Miss Daros, became vaguely conscious that she had been watching him for some time.

"Have you seen Miss Cunningham?" he demanded, without salutation.

"What do you want with her?"

"Has she come out?" Receiving no reply, Woods, in his extreme nervous tension, turned away from her in exasperation.

"You forget my existence," he now heard the young woman murmuring. "You always did."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he said, jerking about with nervous haste, arousing himself to show regret, to bow politely. "I forgot I had been out of town. How have you been? Haven't shown me any of your verses lately. Why is that?" Again he glanced at the box door. His watch was ticking off the seconds.

"For the same reason as when you asked me today at the office," Miss Daros returned, a little wistful with her bitterness.

"I see, I see," he replied, not realizing what she said. "You say you haven't noticed Miss Cunningham come out? You don't think Miss Cunningham has come out?" He glanced at her and was arrested by a look on her face. "I beg your pardon. What did you say?" Again he turned

away, intent on that box door, without awaiting her reply.

"Miss Cunningham's engagement to Mr. Townsend has just been announced."

To her amazement Woods manifested no surprise. "I see," he said. "Good story for you, isn't it? Better catch the earlier edition with that."

It was clear that he wanted to be rid of her. Miss Daros drew near, her eyes narrowing vindictively. "She is only working you, Billy Woods!" she whispered warningly. "That silly little girl, that rich man's daughter"—even employing the familiar cant phrases of her cult, in her overwrought state—"she doesn't care a snap of her fingers for you!"

But Woods had turned expectantly toward the box again. "You won't forget to let me see your verses," he said.

This was too much for the woman. She turned to go. This, too, was unnoticed by him. But as she left she looked back, as other women have done since the days of Lot's wife. There was a fierce struggle between love and hate. She came back to him, love triumphant.

"I don't care what they think," she said to herself desperately, and then to him, with sudden tenderness: "I don't want them to hurt you, Billy! I can't stand it! I won't let them! Come! This is your last chance! Quick!"

Woods became aware that she had ceased speaking, and seeing the hand she held out to him, took it. "Good night," he said pleasantly.

"Good-bye!" the woman burst out with sudden passion. "You've forgotten me once too often. After tonight you'll remember me as long as you live." She did not let go of his hand, for, behind him, as she spoke, she had seen, as he did not, the young girl she hated, stealing softly out from the box, with a paper in her hand, and now noiselessly closing the door. Woods, seeing none of this, had only felt his hand suddenly gripped by both of hers. "Why, for heaven's sake!" he exclaimed.

"Let me go, I tell you!" cried Miss Daros aloud, pretending to struggle to be free. "I don't want your love! I hate you! I hate you!" With a final jerk she threw his hand from hers, and ran away moaning, "It's gone now! Your chance is gone!"

Woods watched her until she disappeared. Then, turning, he confronted Frances, who stood motionless before him.

Her countenance was expressionless, but he took no note of that. He saw the precious draft at last, and supposing, if he stopped to think about it at all, that she had only just appeared, everything else was hurled out of his mind, as he came toward her with tremendous eagerness. "Just in time!" he exclaimed. "Just in time!" He was stopped by the puzzled, questioning look on the girl's face. She stepped back from him.

"Oh, that!" he cried, with a jerk of his head in the direction Miss Daros had taken. "Ever see such a thing! Must be crazy!"

"I believe in you, Billy," pronounced the girl tremulously. "Just tell me the truth."

"Give me— But there's nothing to tell. We go to press at—"

"The truth!"

"Why, I don't know what she meant—truly I don't." He was close to her now, reaching for the draft. "Come, there's no time tonight—"

Their faces were close together.

"Billy!" she cried, putting the draft behind her back, as she recoiled from him. "You've been drinking!"

"Of course I have," he answered, exasperated. "Can't work all day and night on nothing. No time to eat since this morning. No time to explain now. Why worry about me? No time for that, either. Frances!" She had slipped away from him, and was gasping in horror. "What is the matter? What does this mean? Frances! If you love me—"

"I hate you!"

He wilted for an instant. "Then it is so, about Gilbert! But I'll save you all the same." He was up again.

"Quick! The draft—they'll all be out here in a moment—"

She was edging away toward the box door. The muffled music was drawing to the climax of the second act.

"You're going to take away even my right to work for you!" he cried.

"For me! You are working for the man who ruined my father!" It was Woods's turn to recoil. "You don't deny it? You can't! Then all they said is true!"

"No—no—no!" he cried frantically, searching his pockets. "A note here some place, explains—can't find it. Quick! Here they come! Explain tomorrow— For the last time, or I'll have to take it." The latch clicked in the box door.

"Don't make me call for help," she besought him in a whisper, their faces close together, as his hand sought the paper in hers, clenched behind her back. "Oh, please don't!" she repeated, struggling. "It will break my heart."

"You've broken mine already!" she heard, as she felt her feeble hands giving way to his. "But you can't prevent my saving you now!" he cried, as he ran off with the draft, startling Mrs. Metcalfe as he flashed past the box door out of which Gilbert and the general followed.

PART IV

PARK ROW AGAIN

It was getting late and the reporters were rounding up from their night assignments, coming in with dripping raincoats or wet umbrellas. Others had already reported at the desk and were now writing rapidly with green-shaded electric lamps flooding each table with light and reflecting obnoxiously from the writers' copy paper into the writers' eyes.

There wasn't much time for gossip now, and the atmosphere of the room was more tense just as the floor was covered more thickly with crumpled

sheets of copy paper and discarded "flimsy," as they called the News Bureau stories manifoldly typewritten on yellow tissue-paper. Rumpled afternoon editions of other newspapers, published several hours since, and therefore stale and unprofitable helped the effect.

The room was more crowded now, too, for the copy-readers had arrived long ago, and each was slashing away with a large pencil at a little pile of manuscript before him, blowing much smoke at it by way of expressing their disgust.

Stone and Haskill were still at the desk, which was exceptional—both reading copy industriously. Stone, in the case of the more important stories, was building humorous heads. It seemed to cause him considerable melancholy, which he bore patiently. Copy-boxes were whistling and shooting up through the ceiling. A telephone bell was ringing. Electric fans were buzzing excitedly. Down by the gate the office boys were playing horse, as usual.

"Dinner to the prince," muttered one of the reporters, who had been writing in shirt-sleeves. He stuck his manuscript on the file in front of Stone, who nodded imperceptibly and tapped his bell.

"Scrap in the Board of Education," said another reporter, doing likewise.

"The Confession of Faith fight," remarked another wearily.

Stone touched his bell again, more emphatically this time, and called, "Boy, copy!" But the boys were too busy with their own devices to hear.

"Why is Stone keeping the desk tonight?" asked the inquiring Covington, who hadn't had time to inquire before writing his story. "Has White got another baby?"

"Cunningham bill," replied Jones. "Expects something big. Too big for the new night man to handle."

Stone meanwhile had struck the bell three times in rapid succession with the open palm of his hand, each stroke coming down harder until the last ended in a dull, ringless thump. Two

scared boys now came on the run. "If you boys can't learn to answer this bell," he screamed at the two who did answer it, "fired! Here—run!" One of the boys—it was Tommy—meekly took the bunch of copy and ran until out of the editor's sight; then turned and put his thumb to his nose without doubling up his fingers. Then, feeling better, he stuck the copy into the box alongside of the wall, which straightway whistled and shot up through the ceiling.

Jones, stretching his arms with relief after writing, said, referring to Stone's temper, "That's the way he's been ever since this afternoon." Unconsciously he turned to look at Woods's former writing-table, which, in contrast to the other tables, was quite bare and clean.

"Doesn't seem natural," smiled Covington, who had followed the other's glance.

"Sort of stark and staring, eh?" put in young Linton, who had also finished his work.

Covington arose and, sauntering down to the overclean table, sprinkled some copy paper over it, mussed it up a little and then, picking up somebody's coat, dropped it on top. "How's that?" he said, returning to the others, who laughed.

"London correspondent!" murmured Sampson, one of the older men, who was conscientious, sober, industrious and nearly everything else that is said by some to bring success, but it would never come to him. "My, what wouldn't I give for such a chance to pull out of this slavery!"

"It's time Woods was getting out of New York," put in one of the nearby copy-readers, twirling his eye-shade while waiting for a fresh batch of copy to come his way.

"How do you mean?" asked Linton, who was young and curious.

"Been here too long," replied his senior, relighting his pipe. "Ought to break away where he'll learn something new. He's reached the turning point, though he doesn't seem to know it. They never do. He will now go

forward and do brilliant things, or—backward and sink out of sight, like old Harvey Newcomb and Austin Smith, or a dozen other 'horrible examples.'"

"Just like old Billy, though," smiled young Linton, who was still romantic, "to forget about London and his future and everything else on account of a pretty face."

"The best thing that could happen to Woods," replied the older man, who took a more practical view of such matters, "would be to get married and become normalized. It might prove his salvation." Then the boy brought more of the writings of others to be scanned for sins of omission and commission. These ranged from the omission of commas to the commission of libelous statements; and included ever so many other lacks of conformity unto, or transgression of, the laws of the office and the latest policy of the paper. Which latter meant the opinions or preferences of the financial interests in control.

Meanwhile the person they were still talking so much about was flying downtown from the opera, so intent on the outlining of his story that he did not hear the guard call out the stations. Nearing his own, he arose automatically, pressed to the door and was the first to get out upon the platform. He crossed a slice of City Hall Park, planning his introduction. He did not hear a few belated newsboys calling sporting editions, or see the indigent and sleepy refuse of the city shivering and dripping on the benches. He raced across the street to beat a clanging cable-car, mechanically dodged a hurrying mail-wagon, and smiled as a fetching opening sentence flashed into his mind.

Then, like a homing pigeon, he darted in at the old familiar doorway, just as he had always done, ran up the stairs two steps at a time, hurried in to his old desk, swore at the coat lying there, brushed it off upon the floor, sat down and plunged into writing like nothing in the world but a born reporter with a tremendous

beat, who realizes that he has barely time to finish his story before the paper goes to press.

II

THE police headquarters man had telephoned in a bunch of precinct returns, arrests, accidents, and so on. Stone turned his glittering eye-glasses down along the even rows of reporters' desks to pick out the most available men for such of these late stories as seemed worth covering.

It was at this point that Woods came hurrying into the room, with his head thrown back, and passing, on the way, Sampson, Linton and Jones, who gazed at him in surprise. "What the devil!" they whispered, looking at one another, puzzled.

"Haskill," said Stone languidly, "what's Woods doing in this office?"

"Going to leave a note for someone, I suppose," returned Haskill, running his pencil through a half-page of some poor space-grabber's copy. "Spread-head for this?"

"Not worth it," Stone answered, and called upon Sampson to cover a two-alarm fire in Hester street—a tenement house with women and children screaming on the fire-escapes. He handed a fire-badge to Sampson, who, glancing inquiringly in Woods's direction, went on out to get the news.

"Shouldn't think Billy was the sort to drop in here so soon," Stone added as he bent over his work again.

"'Tis sort of queer," Haskill admitted. For Woods was known as something of a stickler for Park Row etiquette.

Meanwhile, the interest in the room was approaching excitement. Scott hurried in through the gate, somewhat late, and marched briskly up to the desk without seeing Woods. "Say! Cunningham's going to get it all around," he announced with relish. "Other papers onto his coming to us."

"Who gave it away?" put in Stone.

"Don't know, but——"

"What did you get out of the property-holders?"

"Well, there's some sort of 'con' game on, sure, and if Cunningham's not the main guy——"

"Up to him to prove it. Write all you've got. Detailed story."

Scott, taking off his coat, hurried down to his writing-desk near the gate, feeling so important that he did not look across at Woods, who was busily writing.

Stone, however, happened to glance in that direction again. "Still here, Haskill."

"Must be writing letters to the whole staff," remarked Haskill, handing copy to a boy who gazed wonderingly at Woods in passing.

But Stone kept on scowling. "Office rules, Haskill—better remind him."

"Oh, say, Mr. Stone, think how he would feel! Wait till he's through writing."

The telephone bell interrupted. Haskill picked up the receiver and listened. Then he said to Stone: "Berwin at Albany—says the governor's going to bed."

Stone took the telephone out of Haskill's hand and gave him a less welcome duty. "Ask Woods if—there's anything we can do for him."

Haskill approached Billy very slowly. The idle reporters stopped talking and watched. It was now so quiet that they could hear Stone saying to Berwin at Albany—though doubtless they did not: "Nothing doing, eh? Well, keep your eyes open. Big story tomorrow when the bill goes through."

Haskill, having stared at Woods from one side, now went around and stared at him from the other. Woods meanwhile kept on writing busily. Haskill came nearer, looking at his old friend's intent face, and cleared his throat as if to speak. Then, quite from editorial habit, he glanced over the writer's shoulder. His head suddenly ducked as his eye rapidly flew down the page of manuscript. He fairly ran all the way back to Stone, with a scared look on his face.

He whispered a few quick, excited words.

The editor sprang out of his seat as if it had been an electric chair, saying all in one breath: "A ten-million dollar steal if it's a cent. Who are they? How did he get it?"

"I tell you I only saw that one page," returned Haskill, excitedly starting toward Woods again. Stone grabbed and held him.

"Wait a minute. What's he doing here? Why does he bring this to us—? Gad! That's it!" Stone had suddenly realized what had happened, and also realizing how easily it might be undone, he instinctively started toward Woods, then stopped abruptly, clapping his hand to his mouth. Haskill, following blindly, bumped into him. "Quick!" whispered Stone, grasping him fiercely. "How'll we work it? Quick!"

"Work what?"

"As soon as he realizes where he is——"

"Oh!" gasped Haskill. He, too, suddenly got it, started toward Woods, was stopped by Stone, whirled about and pushed violently into a chair. And at that point Henderson, the political reporter, arrived from the opera, bursting with news and importance. Smoking thoughtfully, he walked straight to Stone and Haskill. "Well, caught Cunningham up there all right," he began, with his usual deliberation. "Tried to make him read that proof. No go!"

Stone's back was turned, but Henderson, familiar with the editor's custom of attending to several things at once, did not dream that for the first time in his newspaper life Stone was so rattled he did not hear a reporter telling "what he got." Stone and Haskill were clinging to each other's arms like a pair of frightened girls in the surf. "How'll we work it!" they were beseeching each other. "Think, man! You've got to think!"

"But all the same," Henderson went on cheerfully, as he took off his coat, "I've got a story that'll make 'em look up. Somebody's stolen the

old man's original draft of the bill! Now, what do you think of that?"

Still they did not hear him.

"Couldn't we lock him in?" whispered Haskill, which showed how rattled he was.

"But we couldn't force him to write." Stone was recovering the use of his mind. Heretofore instincts only had guided him.

Henderson had laid down his coat. "Now, young Townsend," he continued, "says Billy Woods stole it; but——"

Stone whirled around. "Who?"

Haskill jumped up. "What's that?"

"Billy Woods," repeated Henderson, with the smiling satisfaction of one announcing news of interest. "But Miss Cunningham, she swears that she lent it to Billy till tomorrow morning."

"Lent what?"

"Stole what?"

Both barrels were discharged at once in Henderson's face, who blinked in annoyance.

"Hell! The draft, I said. Anyhow, it's gone and the old man's throwing fits all over town."

"What's this about Billy? Quick!"

This shot from Stone—in a whisper.

"Well, at the present moment, they're all in young Gilbert's auto, scouring the town for him. Ha, ha!"

Henderson's laugh stopped short at beholding a most extraordinary sight, namely, a momentary glimpse of the interior of Stone's mouth. "Oh, you haven't heard of Billy's latest move!" Henderson guffawed again at their slowness. "Why, Billy's gone over to the enemy—fact. Lascalles got him. I always said he would, you know. Saw the little anarchist up there with him, by the way—why, what's the matter?"

Haskill, aghast, was whispering to his superior, as if it were a sentence of death. "Then, that's their story!"

But by this time Stone was himself again, and he did not look at it in that way. He had taken a mental survey of the whole situation, past, present and about to be—as they now learned,

while he talked with a rapidity even he seldom attained. "That beat for those people! Not on your life!" As he spoke, he turned Henderson about for a view of Woods, writing abstractedly. "That story doesn't leave this office except in type. Restrained yourself, Henderson. This is the exposure Cunningham meant us to have in the first place. Suppose he'd want *them* to touch it? One of Lascalles's tricks again. Will you keep still, Henderson. Scott! Scott!! Scott!!!" For Scott had discovered Billy's presence and had been caught just in time, approaching the busy writer with an expression of amazement. Stone was backing away still farther from Billy's part of the room, as if to lead Scott more rapidly away from him. "Come here, Scott." He dashed the idea at the approaching reporter as if throwing cold water into his face. "Re-write your story accordingly," he added. "Henderson, your stuff's no good now. Your assignment for the rest of this night is to guard Billy Woods. Watch the reporters. Watch the desk-men. Watch everybody. Don't let anyone but me speak to him—get within ten feet of him. Jones! see here, Jones, want you to put the boys on as they come in. Understand? Henderson, for heaven's sake, shut up and do as I tell you before too late. Haskill, put all the desk-men on. Now get busy. We've got a chance—a fighting chance."

"But when Cunningham finds Woods isn't there!" put in the persistent Henderson.

"He'll drive like hell to the next paper," interrupted Stone.

"But when he's gone to all the others——?"

"Yes; he'll try this office. What of it?"

"But he'll suspect——"

"Let him suspect. Throw him downstairs and save his life."

"Heavens!" broke in Haskill.

Woods had arisen from his chair and was looking straight up at them. They all looked back at him, fascinated. He suddenly turned and walked rapidly

down the room toward the gate. Stone, Haskell and Henderson bolted down on tiptoe after him. But he wheeled off to the right, past the newspaper files, stepped up to the water-cooler and filled a glass.

"Why, of course, you ass," whispered Henderson to Haskell. "Don't you remember, he always looks around the room before getting a drink?" One of them began turning over the files of an afternoon paper, as if in a great hurry for something. The other was trying to look as if he'd never thought of Billy Woods. "What's Stone doing?" Henderson whispered.

The city editor had calmly turned back and walked over to Billy's desk, while the latter was busy with the faucet. There lay some pages of finely-written copy. His experienced eye skimmed over a paragraph. It made him lust for the rest. It was risky, but he reached over, whisked up the closely-written sheets, all except the last one, and hurried up to the desk with the filched manuscript, just as Woods put down the glass, emitting a wet-lipped "Ah," and started back, wiping his hands on his trousers. As he passed Haskell, he was humming a little tuneless tune. He sat down, ran his hand through his hair, then leaning over, began to write rapidly again, putting the next finished sheet on the top of the one left, as unquestioningly as a hen goes to laying over one nest-egg.

Meanwhile, Stone, reading the copy as rapidly as he alone could, hastily scrawled, "*Nonp., Double lead—RUSH!*" across the top of the first page and sent it up to the composing-room where the foreman, dividing it into several "takes," gave them to several compositors, who put them in type as fast as the keys of the linotypes could respond to their experienced touch. In a few minutes the galley proofs were down on the night editor's hook, with a dozen men bending over them, murmuring excitedly: "Beautiful! Beautiful!"

Stone suddenly called out "Miss Daros."

She had returned at last. Now, though Stone could not see her gazing in amazement at Woods, at so great a distance, he knew that she must have been warned by Jones at the door. Yet she was heading directly toward the man who must not be interrupted.

Pretending not to hear, she did not change her direction until the city editor spoke her name a second time, more sharply. Then, feigning carelessness, she approached the city desk.

"Get your opera story?" Stone elected not to look at her as he spoke.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Will you write it?"

"Yes, sir." She started for her table, but turned over toward Woods.

"At once!" Stone's sarcastic lips were within a foot of her ear, for he had followed her. "You're late enough, as it is."

She was not in the least startled, apparently, and replied, "Certainly. Only I wanted to tell you I got another story up there—" She raised her voice, hoping to gain the absorbed writer's attention: "General Cunningham has announced his daughter's engagement to Gilbert Townsend"—her voice kept growing louder—"and the best thing about it is—"

"Good story," interrupted Stone. "Write that one first."

Woods had not budged. She spoke louder. "I thought it a good story, because, you see—"

"Never mind what you think," Stone interrupted again. "Sit down and write. We'll play it up on the first page," he went on, drowning her out as she kept trying to begin again. "Cunningham's in the public eye. Write a half-column. Here's your desk. Here's some copy paper. Get busy. No time to talk."

She was seated now. But as he turned his back, she quietly arose and quickly made for the gate.

"Miss Daros!" Stone had turned just in time. She slackened her pace. "Where're you going?"

"Home."

"Why?"

"Write my stuff there and send it down by messenger."

"Why?"

"Headache."

Stone only looked at her.

"But up there I can wrap a wet towel around my head, and——"

"Tommy, get a towel and wet it."

"Oh, no—they'd all laugh at me."

"Tommy, never mind towel."

"It'll be so late when I get through, and—you men don't realize how unpleasant it is for a girl——"

"Send you home in a cab at our expense."

Miss Daros, at bay, went to her table to write. "Dreadful air at the opera," she said, very loud. Then, as Stone went on up the room, she started toward the gate again.

"Where're you going this time?" He had turned around.

"Only to get some bromo-caffeine," she said calmly.

"Tommy, run downstairs and get some bromo-caffeine for Miss Daros." The city editor handed the boy some money and went back to the desk at last.

Miss Daros meanwhile deliberately walked up the room toward Woods again. She caught Stone's inquiring glance, like a questionmark of cold steel. "Mr. Woods always has some," she said, but stopped. Stone kept on looking at her. "But the boy won't know what kind I want," she replied.

Stone, without taking his eyes off her, handed another boy some more money. "Get all the kinds," he said.

"You are very good," said Miss Daros, and edged away toward the telephone, but seeing it occupied, she upset a chair, which made no more impression on Woods, writing furiously, than the distant clanging of the cable-cars. "So awkward of me," she said, laughing louder than was her wont. Henderson, whose job it had been to keep everyone ten feet away from Woods, was now most assiduously attentive to her, congratulating himself that he was the one to have suspected her in the first place.

Miss Daros, at her table, wrote with head down. The boy brought the caffeine. She was sulky and paid no attention to it. Stone, passing near, said to her, as he listened at the same time to one of the late returning reporters: "Don't you want your caffeine, Miss Daros?" She flaunted down to the water-cooler, mixed a dose, came back stirring it, gulped it down as she passed near Woods's desk, and then choked and coughed violently. He kept on writing obliviously. Stone, still listening to Lee, looked at her. She resumed writing. It was a note she was writing.

Meanwhile Lee had been following the ubiquitous Stone about like a busy, barking dog. "And then I asked her, 'Won't you say anything about the will contest at all?' and she said——"

"How about her divorce, Lee?" put in Stone, watching Woods, still busily writing, and glancing once more at Daros who, as soon as he had turned his back, approached the telephone booth again, but found it occupied by someone else. Once more she returned reluctantly to her desk; then leaned over to one of the reporters, laughing heartily, jarringly loud. Everyone looked around at her.

"I can't help laughing every time I think of it," she said, dipping her pen again. "It was the funniest thing. Mr. Lascalles told me—Harry Lascalles—you know Lascalles, of the——"

"Tell me the story, Miss Daros," said Stone, hurrying across to her, followed by Lee, still talking.

Miss Daros cowered sulkily. "You're so sarcastic, Mr. Stone," she said. And, thinking she was unobserved, now that he had turned his back once more, she was about to hand a note to a passing boy; but again Stone stopped her, turning suddenly. "No boy can get out of this office tonight except by my orders, till the paper goes to press." She was startled this time and hid the note. Stone went down to the gate. "Boys, come here," he said; "all you boys." They gathered about him. Their faces were awestruck. It

was so horrifyingly unusual to be recognized by Mr. Stone, except as he recognized the bell he punched or the floor he dropped copy upon.

"There's some exclusive news in this office tonight," he announced to them. They knew that already, as he was aware. "If it gets out of here, you all get out, too; every one of you—understand? You're all to be discharged unless we beat the town on this story. Go on talking, Lee." Two other reporters had joined Lee by this time, so that there was quite a procession following Stone's many moves about the room, waiting for a chance to tell what they had, and for instructions as to the treatment thereof. Stone had returned to the desk, followed by them. Miss Daros, unobserved, started the district-messenger call buzzing. Stone heard it and turned too late to catch her in the act. "That's no good, Lee. You needn't write anything." Lee, after all his long, peripatetic report, retired crestfallen. To the other reporters Stone cried desperately, "Oh, talk to Haskill. Haskill, you take the desk for the rest of this night; Woods is enough for me."

"What's the matter with him now?" whispered Haskill. For Woods showed symptoms of uneasiness.

"Leave him to me," returned Stone, who saw that Billy had run out of copy paper. And, grabbing a bunch, he carried it himself to Woods, who growled, "Thanks, Tommy," without lifting his head.

Stone hurried back to Haskill. "Room's too blamed full of people all thinking about the same thing—telepathize him, sure. Send 'em out on assignments. To see if Brooklyn Bridge has fallen down. To see how high the tide rises. Anything. No! Don't let 'em out! All excited—sure to talk—might be overheard. Tell Fatty Smith to start up a poker game in the back room. Get 'em out! Get 'em out! Who rang for this messenger?" For a uniformed boy had shuffled in shouting, "Call!"

"Our mistake," said Stone to the boy, waving him out with a glance

at Miss Daros, who kept on writing busily.

Haskill meanwhile was urging the men to get out of the room. But it was hard to make them stay out. One of the editorial writers who had not yet gone home poked his head in from one of the farther rooms. An inky-armed pressman, waiting for the "make-ready," wandered up from the basement. Water-bugs and cockroaches were scurrying unusually this evening.

Stone stepped over to where Woods sat, tapping with his fingers on the desk, as if waiting for the word. As the editor came near the writer looked up and smiled amiably. It was a gentle, childlike smile, and those watching never forgot it. Stone looked straight back at him and smiled too. It was the only thing to do. The mere lowering of his eyes might kill the most remarkable beat of years.

For that was all it meant to them. They were not in a position to see the mightier issues at stake. Here was a conflict between civic righteousness and the slimy powers of evil. The outcome of this spelled, for the well-liked comrade now smiling before them, love and happiness or else ruin and disgrace, trembling in the balance, suspended by the inexorable fingers of calm-faced Fate, while the little imps of Irony grinned and danced to behold the puppet carried here by the very means that had been employed to trick him away.

But all the same, every man in the room had dropped work for the moment and watched Stone and Billy smiling at each other. And the whole staff held its breath as it saw Stone open his mouth to speak to Woods. Its heart ceased beating as it heard him ask, "How much more of this, Billy?" His languid voice sounded strangely normal.

"Oh, I'll get through in time, I think." Woods's voice sounded quite normal, too.

"Hurry it along," said Stone rather kindly. And then he had the audacity to hold out his hand.

"Yes, sir," said Billy obediently and,

abstractedly handing the editor the written sheets of copy paper, he leaned over and plunged into his work again while the staff thanked heaven. Those who had arisen sank into their seats with a gasp of relief. One man was seen to fan himself.

When Stone reached the desk Haskill stared at him admiringly. "My, you've got nerve!"

"Safe as a man without a memory—long as we can keep him on the jump," said Stone, reading the new batch of copy. But the fingers that wielded his famous pencil were seen to tremble. "Hasn't forgotten how to write," he said, puffing his ugly pipe appreciatively.

"Do you think this will last much longer?" asked Haskill. "Can't possibly get it all."

"Got to. This is no good otherwise."

"Why, it outlines the whole story."

"But does not substantiate a word of it." Stone's manner was ominously quiet.

"That's so!" exclaimed Haskill in sudden alarm. "He says, 'By the mere omission of a comma,' but does not explain where or how—whew! And there wouldn't be time for us to look up the legal end of it now."

"Here, boy," growled Stone. And the new instalment was despatched to the composing-room. Typewriters were clicking, electric-fans were buzzing, the copy-editors were reading, and Billy kept on writing and smoking voluminously. There was one of those silences that sometimes settle down on the noisiest newspaper offices.

Stone was scowling. "Got to 'nihilate that Nihilist,'" he said to Haskill. She was seen speaking to one of the office boys.

"Send her home in a cab now?" suggested the assistant.

"Give anyone the slip."

"Why don't you call her up here and accuse her point blank?"

Stone looked at his subordinate with disgust. "Can't you see?" he said, relighting his pipe, "only makes her desperate—could easily wake him be-

fore we could choke her off. Miss Daros!" he called. "You've written enough. Short of space tonight."

"But the opera story?"

"Damn the opera! Bring me your copy."

The woman reporter finished the sentence she was writing, made a double X-mark beneath it to show the compositors that no more was to follow, brought her copy to the desk, slapped it down in front of Stone, returned to her table, picked up her coat and umbrella and started for home. Jones, at the gate, barred the way, looking uncomfortable but determined.

"The idea!" exclaimed Miss Daros.

"I never heard of such a thing." She turned to Stone, who had sauntered down after her. "Says he's under orders from you not to let me go home until the paper goes to press."

"That's right."

"I won't submit to it. It's outrageous."

"Most unpleasant, as you were saying, so late at night. Wait till we go to press and I'll take you home."

"I'll call for a messenger to take me home."

Stone shook his head.

"I'll telephone for a cab at my own expense."

She turned to the telephone eagerly. They were standing near the booth.

Stone shook his head again.

"I won't be kept here against my will. Mr. Stone, I resign right here and now."

"Accepted. Take effect after we go to press."

"My roommate will be scared to death—in this storm, too!"

"Where's that telephone boy? Someone come here and call up Miss Daros's apartment-house and notify her roommate—"

"Never mind; Charlie's busy helping Dan," put in Miss Daros. "I can explain to her so much better." She had bribed Charlie a few minutes before to make this opportunity for her. She now stepped to the switchboard and arranged the plugs to connect the booth with the main line. She did not

care to be overheard in talking to her roommate, it seemed.

She was stepping into the telephone booth at last. Yet Stone had made no protest. Instead, he waited with his back turned until she closed the sound-proof door, then wheeled suddenly around to the switchboard just outside of the booth and fixed the plugs so that she could talk to no one outside of the building, and imitating the Central's high, feminine voice, he squeaked into the transmitter: "Number, please?" and repeated her answer with the usual incoherent haste. Then covering the transmitter with his hand, he said to Haskill, "Thought so. Their number. Now, Henderson, watch Woods closely. Miss Daros and I are going to have a heart-to-heart talk."

A number of the staff had gathered about. Haskill ordered them away frantically, for fear Miss Daros might see them through the glass door of the booth. Stone, meanwhile, said, again imitating Central's voice, "Go ahead."

He now assumed a strange, masculine tone. "Hello! . . . Yes. . . . What? . . . Oh, you're Miss— . . . No, don't worry, I won't speak your name. . . . Yes. . . . But this is the city room. . . . No, Lascalles is not in his office just now. . . . Yes, it is funny." Stone looked up to wink at Haskill, and went on: "You don't recognize my voice? You've heard it often enough. . . . Oh, don't be so mysterious. I know all about the story. . . . Then what can I say to make you believe me? Listen: your initials are K. D., and you want to talk about B. W. and our great story. . . . Well, but Mr. Munson is out, too. . . . Yep, both out looking for Billy Woods. . . . Hum? . . . Well, that shows I know about it, anyway. . . . In a great hurry, eh? Well, say it, then. . . . What's that about a horrid brute? . . . Oh, that devil Stone, eh? What's the matter with him?"

Stone put his hand over the transmitter to say, "Henderson, stop grinning like an idiot, and watch Woods!"

then assumed Central's voice, saying: "Finished?" and instantly returned to the disguised male voice, thundering, "Can't you keep out, Central! No, *not* finished!" He covered the transmitter again. "Scott, you and Covington stand close by the telephone booth. Now watch out!" Then with his assumed personality once more: "Central, what did you cut us off for? Go on, Miss D. . . . Um-m! . . . Repeat that last."

There was a pause, and as he listened, he waved his free hand in the air with amazement and delight. "Jake Shayne, eh? . . . How soon did Mr. Lascalles say the gentlemen were expected?" He covered the transmitter once more. "Now boys, she won't try to bluff it any longer. It's something too big. She's going to bolt in a minute and try to wake Billy, sure! Grab her—don't let her yell, whatever happens. Haskill, line up some of those loafers as a screen between Billy and the booth. Now then, watch out!"

Scott and Covington, at their places, one on either side of the door of the telephone booth, were poised. Stone said into the transmitter, in his own well-known tones: "Thank you, Miss Daros. That will do. Now, boys, quick!"

Miss Daros burst out of the telephone booth, crying, "You're a traitor, Mr. Woo—" but got no further. Kicking and struggling, she was borne off to Manning's room by Scott and Covington, who had almost failed at their job because they hated it so.

Woods had sprung out of his seat. "What the devil!" he cried. "I can't write with all this infernal noise going on." The other men, lined up as a shield to the unpleasant performance, hid his view of it.

Stone, anticipating trouble, had reached his side. "All right, Billy. All right. Woman came in here and had a fit. Ever see such nerve! That's all—apoplectic. Poor thing! Wasn't it a shame?"

"Well, how do you expect me to write," returned Woods petulantly,

"when women come in here and have fits all the time?"

"Course not. Course not. It's a shame," Stone assented sympathetically, as he pushed him back into his chair. "Old man, hurry your story along."

But Woods still felt imposed upon. "What do they take this place for, anyway?" he demanded.

"Took it for a hospital. Look at the time, Billy. A hospital. Pretty good, eh? This place a hospital. You haven't run in that quotation from the bill. Look at the clock! I tell you the whole story depends on that quotation."

"Going to save that until the last," Woods replied, brightening up and letting bygones be bygones. "Thought I'd run it in under a separate head, eh?"

"All right. Plug ahead."

Woods bent over to write and then stopped, looking at Stone with a sudden gleam in his eye that set the whole room gasping afresh. "No," he declared. "I'll tell you what to do. The two versions of the thing in parallel columns—the deadly parallel! Eh?—always effective." He was writing again. "More artistic. Less ostentatious," he muttered, half-aloud, wagging his head with a self-complacency that was somehow pathetic.

Stone was still bending over him. "Much more artistic, Billy," he said. "Hurry it along. Less ostentatious, too. Keep your eye on the time." But Woods, writing like mad once more, only nodded absently.

"A born newspaper man," remarked the old copy-reader in a low, solemn tone, while all sighed with relief and Stone mopped his brow.

But there was no rest for Stone. "Haskill, wake up!" he cried. "Publishing a newspaper in this office—nothing more heard from that fire for the last hour or two. Send a boy to find Sampson—send two boys so they'll watch each other."

Tommy and Dan were selected. As they went out, the stout managing editor came in, dressed in evening clothes, looking cool and imperturbable.

He had attended that dinner to the prince, the toasts of which had been set up in type long since.

"Why, here's the old man," said Haskill, in surprise.

"Thought we might need him," replied Stone, who made a dive for his superior. "How's it coming on?" asked Manning, smiling.

The city editor had twice summoned him, but Manning had to stay to make a speech. "Mr. Manning, in five minutes Shayne and Nordheimer are due to meet that man Lascales—in a *private room!*—to take a look at Woods's story."

The stout managing editor showed no astonishment, for the reason that nothing ever astonished him, but he flicked ashes from his perfecto and asked: "How do you know they are?"

"Telephone."

"By telephone?" He was almost astonished.

"Oh, never mind—but don't you see what that means?"

"It looks like——"

"Looks like what it is, a nervy, blackmailing job."

"Say, Stone, perhaps I'd better hide in the closet. Woods might look up and wonder at my dress suit."

But instead, he threw off both his coat and waistcoat and plunged into the thick of the fight, as he had often done before on a moment's notice. "Hello, what's this?" he asked. The two office boys, hurriedly returning, marched through the gate with an air of tremendous gravity, breaking boyishly into a run on the way toward Stone.

"I found dis on de sidewalk," began Dan in a whisper.

"Naw, I found it," interrupted Tommy, snatching an envelope out of Dan's hand.

"Fluttered down from some place upstairs."

"Hit Dan on the head."

"Right here."

"No, right dere."

While they were fighting it out, Stone read the address aloud: "Five dollars will be given to the person

delivering this into the hands of H. A. Lascalles, city office of——"

"On *our* office envelope," interrupted Manning.

"Haskill, watch Woods," groaned Stone, running in the direction of Manning's office, where the Daros woman was incarcerated.

"Boys," said Manning, patting their proud heads, "you'll each get five dollars for not doing it."

Since it was a letter from his own private office, he took the liberty of opening it. The note was brief:

W. is turning in the story here. You've got to hustle.

There was no signature. The recipient was supposed to recognize the chirography, and, as it happened, he did. Haskill explained the Daros incident.

The two boys, meanwhile, were exchanging looks, as if uncertain whether to rejoice at the prospect of reward, or to feel insulted professionally.

"You don't tink we'd go back on de paper," Tommy exclaimed, self-righteously.

"Dere ain't money enough in Noo Yoik," chimed in Dan.

But their *esprit de corps* was unheeded.

Woods seemed uneasy and was staring straight ahead of him, rubbing his cheek, his nose, alternating now and then with his hair.

He looked as completely conscious as any of them. At this rate, in any case, he soon would be, they all thought, fairly dancing in silent consternation. Henderson had difficulty in keeping some of the more nervous men back, though what they proposed to do, if he hadn't, they themselves probably did not know. Stone was needed. Haskill flew toward Manning's room. His voice was heard calling through the passage: "Stone, Stone, where are you!"

"Here. Stop your racket——"

"Something the matter with Billy," Haskill whispered. "Come quick!"

"Wait till I lock this door, can't you!"

They came back together, Haskill dragging Stone by the arm, as if he were a surgeon for an emergency case.

"Huh!" diagnosed the specialist, who straightway snatched a box of cigarettes out of someone's surprised hand and tossed them upon Woods's desk, beckoning Haskill to strike a light for him as he did so.

Woods inhaled a great lungful, breathed it forth thoughtfully, then bent over his desk again. "Ah, I have it," he said in an undertone, and this time some of his relaxing colleagues merely closed their eyes, as if in need of rest.

Stone now had a chance to tell about Daros. "Throwing another letter out of the window when I tiptoed in. Only three sheets of paper left on your desk, Mr. Manning. Some of 'em must have got there by this time and——"

"W. P. Woods?" asked a strange boy who had penetrated as far as the gate, exhibiting a letter. "Immediate," he added, pronouncing the word with a correctness that suggested recent coaching.

"Where's this from?" asked Stone, down by the gate by this time.

"Party told me not to say."

"Leave it here till Mr. Woods calls for it."

"Party told me I mustn't."

"Scat!"

The boy ran. Jones kicked at him.

Manning raised his imperturbable eyebrows.

"Yes, Lascalles has discovered his whereabouts somehow," said the latter.

"Boys, looks as if the real fun is just beginning."

"Hasn't run in his deadly parallel yet," remarked Haskill.

"Whole story hangs on that," said Manning.

"How much longer can they hold open that form?" asked Haskill. They were all looking at the clock.

"Everything else is ready for casting," said Stone. He was near the open window, and suddenly pointed to the street. "Notice that devil-wagon whiz by?"

"A Mercedes," nodded Manning.

"Townsend, with Cunningham and his daughter, breaking the speed limit," said Stone.

"Checked off most of our 'esteemed contemporaries' by this time," remarked Manning.

"Say, Stone," put in Haskill, "Mr. Manning tell you? Has cabled the whole situation to the chief."

"Ought to amuse him," smiled Manning.

"Catch him at *déjeuner* by Paris time," said Stone.

Talking thus, they sought to keep down their anxiety. The city editor was about to add something else when he, and all the rest of the office, with the possible exception of Manning, were lifted into the air by the loud report of a revolver shot in the hallway, which filled their ears with the ominous reverberation always caused by firearms discharged indoors.

Woods was out of his seat. Stone was at his side. Scott and Covington rushed out into the hall. Others went after them. Manning remarked, "Getting desperate, eh?"

"All right, old man," Stone was saying as he patted Billy on the back. The man trembled like a high-spirited thoroughbred. "Nothing but a suicide—one of the pressmen—persecuted by the foreman. You'd better lead up to your deadly parallel now. Getting late." He pointed at the clock and Woods, again resembling a thoroughbred, responded to the lash.

Covington and Scott came back, dragging in an Italian organ-grinder and organ. "Can't make him tell who put him up to it," Scott whispered to the city editor.

"Lock him up some place till we go to press," directed Manning.

Stone turned to Sampson, just back from the tenement fire, now under better control than Stone's temper. "Don't write any more," he snapped out before Sampson could open his mouth, or even the gate. The main story, sent in by telephone, was already set up.

"Lascalles and Munson," said Samp-

son, with a jerk of the head—"disappearing around the corner."

"Oh, they'll come back," said the cheery Manning.

Stone sought Billy. "How's the parallel coming?"

The writer made a gesture which meant, "Don't bother me!" Stone obeyed.

"Only a few minutes longer," Haskill kept repeating to everybody, with a forced smile. No one paid any attention to him.

Tommy's shrill treble came in through the hall door. Everyone listened. "There ain't *nobody* go'n' ter see him till he's trew writin', I tell you."

"Here they come!" thrilled Haskill.

"Lascalles's voice," said Henderson.

"Come on, fellows," urged Covington. Several others were for rushing out and bowling the enemy down the stairs.

Stone restrained them. "Only make 'em desperate—yell into Billy—spoil the whole thing."

"Haven't landed the story yet, by any means," chuckled Manning.

It was now unmistakably Lascalles's voice, and it sounded as if he were tiring of argument. "Then I'll tell him myself."

"Tell nothin'," Tommy shrilled back defiantly, "not till he's trew writin', I said."

"For God's sake, try to keep your heads like Tommy, and we'll land this thing yet," besought Stone of the excited ones. He, too, was feeling the strain, but he did not show it. As he spoke he disrespectfully backed Manning, his superior, up the room, almost to Woods's chair, sprang upon a desk, turned the hands of the clock five minutes ahead, jumped down again and ran to Billy. "Heaven's sake, man, haven't you finished yet? Look at the time!"

Woods looked at the clock, gasped in astonishment and spurted for the finish. With the sounds of a scuffle at the door, Tommy, still struggling, was suddenly pushed in, tumbled over, and there stood Lascalles and Munson.

They stopped short before reaching the gate, however. For, just inside of it they beheld nearly the whole staff lined up in close rank. It was merely a human screen which had been marshaled by Manning, who stood at the back of it, whispering, "Keep cool. Play for time." Three more seconds had already been gained.

During which lengthy period Stone, grabbing another page of Billy's copy before he had reached the bottom of it, ran over to the copy-slide with it. "Rush!" he said through the speaking-tube. "The rest as fast as he writes it."

Manning, in an unimpassioned tone, was asking, in his dignified manner, "What does that excited person want here?"

"Our story!" shouted Lascalles. He looked right and left for Woods, but could not see him.

"All right," replied Stone, approaching with a proof. "Here you are."

What Lascalles saw on that proof stopped him, thunderstruck. More valuable seconds. Stone had already run back to Billy and whispered, "Wind it up quick!" grabbed another sheet and rushed to the slide again.

Lascalles was now waving the proof. "Our story," he cried. "You've stolen our story!"

"Yep," said Haskill, lighting a cigar, and addressing nobody in particular; "long as they didn't care to print it—thought we would." Jeering laughter followed, which took time.

Lascalles was at bay now. "Nordheimer! Shayne! Quick! He's in here—they won't let me see him."

The notorious two now bolted in.

Lascalles had watched Stone, and was now jumping up in the air to see over the heads of those before him. He discovered Woods. "There he is! We've got him!" And he sprang up on a chair, calling: "Woods! Oh, Woods! Come here!"

"That will do!" thundered Manning.

Woods, still writing, nodded. "Wait a second, can't you!" He seemed to be irritated.

"Make a noise," commanded Man-

ning, for most of them were listening stupidly.

In the hubbub which followed, no one's words could be distinguished for a moment. But Stone could be seen patting Woods on the back with one hand; with the other pointing to the clock. Now he secured one more sheet of copy, and shot across the room with it. Lascalles saw this and became desperate. He made a dash at the gate. Scott crashed it shut in his face. Lascalles began screaming for Woods. There was shouting, expostulation, confusion. Over and above it all now arose the wheezy notes of the hand-organ, playing, "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight"—Covington's inspiration. Woods kept on writing.

Shayne was waving his hands wildly to gain a hearing. "Gentlemen, this is all a mistake, a misunderstanding!"

Manning bent over to listen. "All about the mistake," he put in, whisking the proof from Lascalles. Shayne stopped, as if fascinated by what he saw. To him it spelled Sing Sing.

Nordheimer was also shouting, it appeared: "If you dare print that—"

"Look it over!" Nordheimer now found the proof in his hands. He collapsed like a pricked balloon. There was a sudden silence. Woods had finished his day's work.

He now came striding down to see what all the confounded row was about, as though he considered it a disgrace to the office.

All turned and looked at him, as he came toward them with hands in his pockets, his brows knit, his eyes tired.

The silence was so intense that Stone's jubilant voice could have been heard speaking through the tube: "Yes, that winds it up, thank God! Jam it through!" and this touched off Lascalles.

His voice was shrill as an animal's in a trap: "Billy Woods! You damned sneak! What have you done with our story!"

Woods stopped abruptly. His hands remained in his pockets.

It is said that certain of the men

turned their eyes away. But what was especially inconsiderate in those who stared, fascinated, was that not one of them said a word to him as the thing came over his horror-stricken face in quick flashes of intelligence. It was all over in a moment. He grasped the whole situation and sank down exhausted, at the nearest desk. Manning put an arm about him like a father as Stone appeared leading in Miss Daros. "Another big story tomorrow," he said, pointing at her.

"Another lie!" cried Shayne. Lascalles had wilted.

"A put-up game—the whole thing!" bellowed Nordheimer.

"Ask Cunningham." Stone's quick ears had detected approaching footsteps, and now Townsend burst in, followed by the general and Frances, all of them out of breath.

Gilbert, with finger pointing at Woods, cried to Frances: "What did I tell you!" Then called upon Manning: "What's that man doing in your office?"

"Here's the answer," came from Stone. And once more the limp proof played its part. Frances snatched it eagerly. All three bent over it.

"Father! Father!" cried the girl, pointing, "'Thanks to General Cunningham's shrewdness—' Oh!" She let him have the printed words; she turned to the author of them, who had arisen to meet her.

At that moment the gong rang, the floor began to shake, and there came up from far below, the deep, heavy rumbling of the mighty presses which would soon spread the news all over the civilized world.

And now all the room was in sudden, jubilant commotion, everybody trying to explain to everybody else, all trying to shake Billy's hand at the same time, the office boys cheering, dancing, whistling, throwing hats and coats in the air.

The rest happened quickly. Even before Lascalles and his crumpled crew had reached the street, to the tune of Covington's hand-organ following them out into the hall, a boy

had burst out of the telephone booth, butted his way through the dancing, shouting reporters to Mr. Manning's side. The fat managing editor, red and perspiring, bent over while the boy shouted in his ear, then straightened up quickly, shouting above the tumult: "General, your bill is vetoed!"

Then, amid more excitement and more shouting, with the general grasping Woods's hand, Billy trying to rise, the secretary restraining him, Frances fanning him, Gilbert looking on from the doorway, another boy came running to Mr. Manning. The managing editor was seen to mount a desk.

He waved a cablegram in his hand: "'Reappoint Woods to London.' Boys, three cheers for Billy and the general!"

The tidal wave of jubilation swept the somber old room of most of its occupants. The hand-organ was dying away in the distance.

Gilbert, standing by the gate, was holding it open for Frances and her father to pass out. At last he caught her eye. She shook her head and remained beside the reporter. Gilbert, watching intently, understood. He hesitated a moment, as if paralyzed by the conflict within. Then he drew near, rather shyly, took and shook his cousin's hand heartily, and quickly left the room.

The general turned to Billy. "If you feel quite recovered," he began solicitously, and started on ahead. Woods arose slowly, as if adjusting himself to reality. He looked at the slender girl beside him. It was the dingy, deserted old newspaper office. He and she were alone in it.

"Gilbert is not coming on the *Cedric*," said the girl. "Will you join us?"

"Of course, this is all a dream," he said, gazing at her across the desk that stood between them. "How long do you think it will last?"

"How long do you want it to last?" she asked.

Before his eager, questioning gaze her eyelids fluttered and fell. It was answer enough.

FOR ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

SWEETHEART, ere spring awakes
Out of her slumber deep,
Before the bud in beauty breaks
And brooks their prisons leap,
Across the drifted snow,
Mile upon lonely mile
The tireless feet of Cupid go
To find spring in your smile.

It matters not how dim
The Winter's world may be,
The hidden paths are known to him,
And straight ahead goes he;
Along the mountain trail
By valley road he flies,
Sure at the end he shall not fail
To find spring in your eyes.

Some morning at your door
A timid knock shall tell
Of Love's arrival, evermore
In peace with you to dwell;
His lips shall ask your kiss,
And plead with rosy art;
Beloved, grant his dream of bliss,
To find spring in your heart.

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.



HOPE DEFERRED

MADGE—Don't worry about a husband, dear. A pretty girl is certain to marry.

MARJORIE—It would be all right if there wasn't such an uncertainty about the certain things of this world.



“HOW did he happen to settle in Chicago?”
“Because he owed everybody in New York.”

BALLADE

YOU sing to me, "Sweetheart, the sky
Endures because your lips are red;
God made the earth to please your eye,
And from your smile the stars are fed."
Hush, look—the satyr's grinning head
Laughs at your song. He knows the sound!
There are so many people dead
Who seemed to make the world go round.

Where are the lips whose smile and sigh
Held up the clouds for Palomed?
Where are those eyes whose tear and dry
Made green the spring to Ethelred?
Where is that tress of golden thread
That all King Herod's empire bound?—
There are so many people dead
Who seemed to make the world go round.

Boy, if your sweetening were to die
Would the moon fade? Ah, me; instead
To Ylen's window, so close by,
How soon your feet would blithely tread!
Where Sheba danced, they made her bed;
With groping roots is David crowned:
There are so many people dead
Who seemed to make the world go round.

Aye, worse than dying do we dread
To lie forgotten in the ground—
There are so many people dead
Who seemed to make the world go round!

BEATRIX DEMAREST LLOYD.



GLASS HOUSES

"HA! Ha! You don't know how funny these items really are," said the drummer. "Listen to this: 'Ed Mossback was seen driving Sunday. He had a fine new horse and a pretty girl.' Ha! Ha!"
"Wal, I dunno," the goodsbox philosopher replied. "Here's an item from the New York *Howler*: 'Mrs. Van der Vest was observed driving in the Park yesterday. It was noted that her lap-dog wore a coat of soft green leather, a departure from the ruby velvet which has been so popular.'"

HALF-GODS AND GODS

By Emery Pottle

THE Thorpe girls—Ellen and Sarah—lived with their mother in a high-shouldered, ugly, white, wooden house, the front of which was kept tightly closed by expressionless, weather-beaten green shutters. The house would have seemed—had Fisherville inclined in the least to the morbid practices of analysis—a not unfitting retreat for the shut-in lives of the two sisters—high-shouldered, pale, plain women, consumed by the duties of their household and the care of a feeble-minded, fretful mother, who but seldom left her bed or her wheel-chair. As for the matter of age, Fisherville—which had an offensive clarity of memory and had accurately known the Thorpe girls from birth—said Sarah would never see forty again, and Ellen was a good thirty-five. They lived, then, in a mediocrity of age and a mediocrity of soul, uneventfully in their precise, dark, chilly house pervaded by some nameless, damp, dreary odor.

It was their polite custom, born of a modest necessity, to take, now and then, an exemplary roomer. So when Arnold Witherspoon, a refined, single gentleman of some forty years, came to Fisherville to be the principal of the academy, the town, by common consent, said that the Thorpe girls' big, back room upstairs was just the thing for him. And Witherspoon, whose experience in living had compassed little of greater comfort than the Thorpes' back bedroom, was satisfied enough. Being of a nature most modest and delicate where women were concerned, and of an excessive neatness, he had come and gone unobtrusively for the

past two years, and had grown, in the minds of the Thorpe girls, as much a dignified and fixed part of their existence as their social position or their religion.

Fisherville, indeed, was somewhat in awe of Witherspoon. His solemn seriousness and utter lack of humor stood to the townsfolk as the outward and fitting garment of deep erudition. In consequence it came to be Fisherville's habit to treat with him, in official matters, through the Thorpe girls. And Sarah, being the elder, and so less disposed to the playful vagaries of sentiment, generally was called to act as interpreter.

In the two years, therefore, the elder Miss Thorpe had—though, of course, she did not so allow herself to consider it—come to be almost on terms of intimacy with Arnold Witherspoon. She had so many times invited him to Fisherville's social events and asked him to bring lemons or sugar or a pound of coffee, or whatever the occasion might demand, to the various picnics and church entertainments. Not infrequently she had seen him in his slippers, and on one mortifying evening had dreadfully encountered him without a collar. All this made for the breaking down of the barriers of formality.

It was, too, Witherspoon's chivalrous custom to accompany Miss Sarah home each Sunday night from church—Ellen, who was of a delicateness, being unable to attend but the morning service. So Fisherville presently came to regard the schoolmaster as Sarah's—joked about them, indeed, good-naturedly. And Sarah Thorpe, influenced by the subtle tides of frank opin-

ion perhaps, came in time tacitly to accept their conclusion and to cherish the seed of ownership.

What Ellen Thorpe's attitude to the whole affair was could not definitely be deduced. Occasionally when some venturesome gatherer of sentimental news said to her, "Well, Ellen, I suppose you'll be having a brother-in-law before long?" it was her wont to draw herself up haughtily with, "I am sure I don't know what you mean." Fisherville, in exasperation, not unnaturally imputed to Miss Ellen a variety of dark, personal interests in Wither-
spoon.

On a late August evening Arnold Witherspoon himself descended impressively—his slightest act was unavoidably impressive—to the lower floor of the Thorpe dwelling. The night was oppressively hot and Sarah Thorpe, in the sheer exhaustion of a long day of preserving fruits, had slipped wearily into the gloomy, shuttered parlor, and there, in the damp-chill of the room, was rocking to and fro in the dusk. Ellen was at prayer meeting.

"Miss Sarah?" modestly inquired Witherspoon.

"Oh, is it you, Professor Witherspoon?" and Sarah Thorpe hastily arranged her unloosened collar. "If you'll come in, I'll light a lamp." His entrance and the ensuing feeble illumination of the room took place in portentous silence. "Won't you be seated?" Sarah invited nervously.

Witherspoon was a tall man with huge, round limbs and great, thick, red hands—marks of his early days of toil which his later rather sedentary life could not subdue. He walked with a peculiar stiffness of legs, which caused his feet to strike the floor with a certain majestic thud.

"I have come," he said, with a harsh clearing of his throat, "to speak to you on a matter of great importance—to me, and I trust to you."

Miss Sarah felt a strange, nervous sensation gripping at her stomach. Her sole clear mental operation was a sickening sense of shame that she had

not changed into a fresher gown. She bowed vaguely, her cheeks flushing.

"To be methodical," he went on, gaining assurance with the sound of his voice in his ears, "I am a man of forty-one, of—I may say—few vices and no bad habits. I have laid by in the past years of my professorship an adequate competence, and there is none dependent on me for support. In short, Miss Sarah, I have come to that period in a man's life when it is fitting and desirable to take a—ah—a wife."

Miss Sarah sat up very stiffly and stared straight before her at the crayon portrait of her father. Inwardly there was not the tumult that she had rather imagined came at such intimate moments. Her mind, grateful and proud, to be sure, engaged itself in formulating some dignified phrase of acceptance. She wondered, too, guiltily, how it felt to be kissed by a man.

Since she made no tangible response, Witherspoon continued. "I presume these words are no surprise to you"—Miss Sarah made a protesting motion—"that, in short, you are aware of the trend of my conversation. For I know between sisters there is that beautiful confidence—which—ah"—he could not see in the dim light her questioning face—"which—in short, Miss Thorpe, I ask you for the hand of your dear sister, Ellen."

A cast as of plaster set over Sarah Thorpe's mind and heart. She presently rose calmly and turned down the lamp, which was beginning to smoke; she carefully arranged the pink silk drape on her father's portrait. Over her shoulder she said monotonously, "You have spoken to Ellen?"

"Oh, yes," he answered importantly. "She, of course, told you, did she not?"

"Yes, she told me—of course."

"And she has done me the inestimable honor of accepting my suit. I shall, it is needless to say, Miss Thorpe, cherish her always."

Sarah Thorpe faced him quietly. Her voice was colorless—it was useless to try to infuse any warmth in it then. "You have done my sister a great honor. I am satisfied it should be as

you wish." She put out her hard, roughened hand.

Witherspoon took it ceremoniously, and clasping it said, "I want to say, Miss Sarah"—he hesitated—"that you and your mother shall be the care—ah—and—ah—of your dear sister and myself as long as—if it might be arranged for us to live here together——"

She turned away from him in a momentary repulsion. "We can discuss that at another time. If you will excuse me now—I am very tired—and my mother will want me. Good night."

"I thank you," he solemnly concluded.

In her own room Sarah Thorpe sat down grimly. So unused was her mind to sentimental broodings that she scarcely recognized the conclusion of her own romance—if such it had been. She did not formulate a cry of distress that love for her was now a thing of ashes and charred embers. The moment resolved itself into, "Could he have guessed? Did I show it? Oh, could he have thought I thought he meant *me*? Oh, my soul, have I ever acted as if I thought he was ever going to marry *me*? And what will people say—what *will* they say? Oh, that Coleman woman and Mrs. Higginbotham—how they'll talk! Oh, my soul!"

Presently Ellen Thorpe came home. Her sister heard her and, going to the stairs, she called sharply, "Ellen, Ellen, come here, I want you."

Ellen, a lamp in her hand, ascended the stairs, with an air of innocence. She was a tall, slender woman with a pinched, delicate face, washed, as it were, with a simper of girlishness which she never allowed to disappear. Her garments were of a sentimental nature, usually of pale, unsubstantial fabrics which hung limply; she was fond of collarless gowns, disclosing a long, coral-beaded neck. Fisherville referred to her as an elocutionist.

"We had a very good meeting," she began busily.

"Come in here," her sister said shortly, holding open her bedroom door.

"He's told me," she continued briefly.

"Oh, Sarah—I!"

"Yes, I know all that," interposed Sarah coldly. "But are you going to marry him?"

"He has asked me to be his wife and I have accepted him," Ellen said with an affectation of unworthiness irritating to her sister.

"That's what I wanted to know. Now, Ellen Thorpe, how long has this thing been going on? How long have you known about his—feelings?"

Ellen glanced at her sister nervously.

"Sarah, I never, honestly, dreamed that he—he cared for me, *honestly*. I thought all the time"—she hesitated slyly—"it was you he wanted."

"How long?"

"He asked me a fortnight ago."

"And you never told?"

Ellen hung her head with a delicate maidenliness. "Sister, it was our secret—a lover's secret. He wanted to speak, but I—if you had ever loved, Sarah, you would understand."

"I have nothing to say, Ellen. He's a good man, and I hope you will be a worthy wife to him. But I tell you this: I shall never get over your not telling me—*never*. Good night."

"I don't see any reason for your acting so funny about it, Sarah," said Ellen as she departed. "Love—true love—goes where it's sent, and when. I guess I had better announce it at the Mather tea tomorrow—if *Arnold* thinks best. You might congratulate me, sister."

Sarah shut the door on her angrily.

II

It had been what Fisherville called an early fall—by which they meant that the splendid pageantry of color, the last riotous fling of a reckless sovereign, came too soon and too soon sank into the sodden depression of gray days, dull skies and a dead, leaf-strewn country. Sarah Thorpe was not given to poetic figures or she might, as she hung out the washing in the backyard

on November's first Monday, have found a singularly apt comparison in the chill gloom of the morning to the events of the past two months.

Her thoughts—gray ones—were busy with an infinitely more prosaic subject; yet in the sum of things perhaps as humanly touching as the vague metaphors of nature.

"Always, just at this time, he used to put on his winter underthings," she was musing. "How many, many times I've washed them for him—and never shrunk them.

"It doesn't seem as if it could be—poor Ellen—and yet—I don't know, I don't know. My soul, how queer things come about! Sometimes it seems to me I haven't the right to—and then again I sort of feel it inside me that mine's the only right—no one else, just *me*!" She sighed helplessly and went on hanging up the wet, flabby, clinging pieces of linen.

Ellen Thorpe had been married to Arnold Witherspoon early in September, with a quiet and a simplicity contrary to her desires but in keeping with the Thorpes' straitened circumstances. And they had gone on living, all of them, in the ugly, white house, just as before. At first it was for Sarah horrible; she shrank from the intimacy of the two as from a physical hurt. "I don't see how I can stand it," she kept repeating to herself as she went about the house. And then, after a fortnight, suddenly she almost ceased to resent them. So strong was her habit of service to him that it continued of its own momentum. She found herself, as she put it, "doing for him" with the same sober, suppressed pleasure as of old. Ellen accepted it all unthinkingly—glad to be rid of the irksome duties of stocking-darning, button-sewing and the choosing of the food *he* liked best.

Occasionally Sarah wondered why she no longer chafed at the sight of Witherspoon and Ellen, why her heart did not continue to contract and dry up and harden when they talked—with that dreadful pronoun *we*—of their plans and aims. But presently

she gave over the unaccustomed analyzing; she put by the garment of her dream as women often treasure a beautiful gown of a long-forgotten period.

After all, there was only a month of it for them—a month of the married Witherspoon. He had come home early one afternoon from the Academy and had lain down in the back bedroom to rest. Ellen was paying calls in her new purple silk gown. When tea-time came Sarah knocked on his door. He did not answer. Nor did he ever answer again from his rest. They found him lying there, in his large, stately fashion, dead. His heart, so the doctor told them importantly, had *failed*.

The three women, in their pale, plain suffering, lived on as before. Life did not greatly alter for them. Save for the shadow across the memory of a Presence—huge, impenetrable, gentle, impersonal—there was little reason why their life should know change. So the three of them—an old, half-witted woman, prattling incessantly, between tears and smiles, of the return of her son; Ellen, wrapped in gruesome draperies of grief, sitting eternally in the back bedroom sewing on more mourning clothes, damp with her conscious tears; Sarah . . .

In the depression of the early November morning, then, Sarah Thorpe continued to hang out the washing. There Mrs. G. M. Higginbotham found her.

"Good morning," she called to Sarah; "awful weather for drying anything, isn't it?"

As she came nearer—"How's Ellen today?" Her voice vibrated with the eagerness of suppressed desire—giving the effect of one playing scales when she yearns to burst into concertos.

"About the same, I guess, Mrs. Higginbotham. Ellen suffers constantly. It's very hard for her."

"Poor girl," breathed Mrs. Higginbotham, with the ready soft-stop of dismal sympathy the slightest mention of woe always controlled. "It's very hard for you all."

"Yes."

"Sarah," Mrs. Higginbotham proceeded in a somewhat presidential manner, "there is something I think I ought to tell you."

Sarah paused in the hanging of a sheet. "Well?"

"Mrs. Coleman called me up this morning on the 'phone and told me, and said she thought you ought to know it, and that I was the one to tell you." Sarah nodded.

"You've read in the paper, I suppose, about the entertainment that the Mather Missionary is getting up to buy new chandeliers for the church? Well, it's going to be fine, I think—and it's a great disappointment to us all that Ellen can't recite at it. She couldn't, of course—*now*."

"No."

"Well, you know, we sent away for that Professor Plough—he spells it like plough, only he calls it *ploo*—who gets up entertainments around the country, to take charge of it. And he's *come*."

"Well, what of it?" briefly inquired her hearer.

"Sarah Thorpe, he's the living, breathing image of Professor Wither-spoon!" Mrs. Higginbotham paused dramatically for the effect.

With an effort Sarah picked up a piece of linen and fastened it to the line. When the sudden beating of her heart had abated she said coldly, "You say he is like him? It is strange how these resemblances sometimes happen, isn't it?"

Mrs. Higginbotham's matutinal zeal was dampened, but she made another sympathetic attempt. "I thought you ought to know it on Ellen's account," she continued. "If she should meet him unexpectedly, you know—the shock—I thought you'd better know." She backed away with dignity.

"You were right, Mrs. Higginbotham," Sarah Thorpe replied rather reluctantly. "I suppose she ought to know. And I'm obliged to you. I'll think it over and try to decide what is best to do about it."

"Well, I thought I had better tell you," reiterated her friend, disappointedly turning to go.

"Yes, that was right."

Sarah Thorpe turned the matter over and over in her mind throughout the morning. "I can't decide whether I'd better tell her or not," she debated uncertainly. "Tisn't likely she'll see him, and she won't go to the entertainment. I don't see why I ought to excite her by telling her this man looks like *him*. But if she should see him unexpectedly it would kill her. I don't know that I could bear it myself. Like *him*. Strange! I don't think I *could* bear it—and poor Ellen, I'm afraid I've misjudged her. Sometimes I've thought she didn't really love him at all; but since he's—gone—she's suffered so. I'm afraid I'm a selfish, wicked woman. I wonder if I ought to tell her. Ellen, *where* have you been? *What* is the matter with you?"

Sarah turned hastily from the tubs to her sister, who came pantingly into the laundry, calling her name. She was dressed for the street, and her elaborate crêpe veil, sagging funereally about her face, accentuated her pallor and her gleaming black eyes.

"I've been out for a walk. I couldn't stand it in the house any longer," she burst out flutteringly. "And, Sarah Thorpe, what do you think! I felt at first as if I should die, but afterward—I've seen *him*! Oh, my Lord, how like him he looks!"

The older woman kept control of herself by a ghastly inward effort. "I know what it is," she said at last gently, "I—poor girl, I'm so sorry. I was going to tell you."

Ellen stared at her curiously. "To tell me? How did you know?"

"Mrs. Higginbotham told me this morning."

"Told *you*? Well, at least, you might have—He's very nice and refined," she went on, forgetting her complaint, "with a lovely voice."

"Did you *talk* to him?"

"He asked me the way to Mrs. Coleman's. I had to answer, didn't I? And he told me his name," Ellen rambled on with her old assumption of girlishness. "And he said he was getting up the entertainment. He is so

sorry I can't help on account of my trouble."

"You talked to him—told him things—a stranger? Ellen, how could you?"

"When people are polite it's usually customary to be polite, too. He was very sympathetic—he has heard of me and my reciting, he said. He is so like Arnold. Mercy, Sarah, anyone would think the way you look at me that I had done some awful thing." She burst into tears weakly and left the room with, "I'm all alone now poor Arnold has gone—all alone."

Sarah Thorpe sat down wearily on an upturned tub. "I don't know what to think," she sighed. "Maybe it's her way. But oh, Arnold Witherspoon, if you can hear and know where you are, it is not *my* way—it isn't the way I'd have cared."

III

"AFTER all, it is just Ellen's way. She has her way and I have mine—and it's not strange that they shouldn't be alike."

Sarah came to this decision after a sleepless and perturbed night. And the decision—if so it could be called—gave her comfort and release from her denunciation of what she regarded as Ellen's faithlessness. In the course of the morning the doorbell jangled imperiously. Sarah went hastily to the door, omitting her usual custom of cautiously peering through the blinds to see who it might be.

She stood as if turned to stone, staring at the man before her. Powerless to move or take her eyes from his face, she waited in a deadly fascination. He was speaking, hat suavely in hand.

It seemed hours before her mind began to work again—she caught his words as one hears an orator in the midst of a great tumult. Then life came back to her tempestuously and with it a fierce loathing for this creature in Arnold's image. She tried to command the indignation in her voice.

"What do you wish?"

He smiled unctuously, showing pro-

fuse teeth. "Mrs. Coleman thought perhaps Mrs. Witherspoon—you, no doubt, are her sister?—might be willing to assist me in my work here by suggesting—ah—certain qualifications—ah—Is she in? Might I see her? I am Professor Plough."

"No, she is not at home," Sarah responded sternly. "You cannot see her."

He continued to stand by the door, smiling vaguely his disappointment. "When will she be at home?"

Sarah Thorpe's conscience was not trained to continuous deception. After all, as she hastily deliberated, he had done nothing. It was natural enough to want Ellen to help. "Wait here," she said abruptly. "I'll see."

She went directly to Ellen's room. "That man is down there," she said harshly. "He wants you. I told him you were out."

"Professor Plough? You said I was out? Sarah Thorpe, I'd be ashamed to lie. You needn't try to run my affairs either—now I'm alone." Ellen became slightly tearful. "Is he there?" she demanded suddenly.

"He's down there at the door."

Ellen was instantly at the mirror arranging her hair and freshening her gown.

"Ellen, you're not going to ask him in this house—here where Arnold used to be?" Sarah asked pleadingly.

Her sister stared at her coldly as she hurried out of the room. "I guess you're crazy," she threw back scornfully. Sarah heard her high, flute-like voice calling: "Won't you come in? My sister thought I was out, but I am at home, you see."

Plough stayed quite an hour. The sisters did not speak again that day—Sarah could not trust herself to speech and Ellen seemed wrapped in some agreeable reflection of her own. Alone in her room she even hummed a little tune. In the late afternoon she went out for a walk. Mrs. Higginbotham had gratifying occasion to telephone Mrs. Coleman that she had seen Ellen Thorpe out walking with the professor on the river road.

The next day and the next Plough came to the Thorpe house. Ellen was alert for the sound of the bell and herself opened the door. By some indefinable change her garments appeared less mournful. Her eyes had not lost the gleam of that first day's meeting with him. Never by any strain of the imagination a pretty woman, there seemed, none the less, now evoked in her a force—an ancient feminine force—which induced a change in her features. She had a vitality which attracted.

Even Sarah wonderingly and resentfully saw it. These were hard days for the older woman—hard, helpless, confused days. Ellen vouchsafed little explanation of matters. "He's asked me to help select the talent," she remarked importantly. "I'm better acquainted with the talent here than he is, of course."

Sarah, passing by the closed door of the parlor on the third day of Plough's visits, heard Ellen reciting "The Raven" for him. Her face reddened with anger. Ellen had never recited for Witherspoon—he was not sympathetic, she said. Sarah waited impatiently for the man's departure. He had hardly left the house when her rage broke its bounds.

"Ellen, what does this mean? How long is this performance going to keep up?" she cried out.

"I don't know what you refer to," Ellen answered nervously.

"You know what I mean! This man—coming here day after day! And you a woman whose husband has been dead but a month! What are you *thinking of*?"

"He—I—" stammered Ellen in extenuation.

"And only today I heard you reciting your silly pieces to him. *Here*—in this room—where not four weeks ago *he* lay there—*there where you are standing!*—in his coffin."

Ellen made a shivering movement of dread and backed away.

"Oh, I can't understand you!" her sister cried excitedly. "Oh, I——"

All at once the impetus of her anger

forsook her. She burst into violent, hysterical sobs. "To think of—his memory—desecrated— Oh, my soul!" She hid her face in her apron and left the room.

Ellen went for her walk as usual, so Mrs. Coleman confided to Mrs. Higginbotham. And Plough joined her. But he did not again come to the Thorpes'.

IV

On the morning of the Mather Missionary Society entertainment Sarah Thorpe, in a somewhat softened mood, went to her sister's room. The two women had scarcely spoken to each other for the past three or four days. Save for the afternoon walks with Plough—and of this Fisherville had not gained courage to tell Sarah—Ellen kept closely to her room. Since Plough had ceased to come to the house Sarah felt that she had awakened a sense of shame in her sister's frivolous breast.

"I guess it's because she's a fool, natural born—and maybe I'm one too—that she has acted so. I have been too hard on her," she deliberated as she mounted the stairs. "I'll apologize."

"Ellen," she began abruptly, "I'm afraid I was a little hard with you. What are you doing there? What are you sewing?" She stared fearfully at the pile of white stuff in Ellen's lap.

Ellen made an involuntary movement of concealment. "I'm— Why do you always keep bothering me so?" she replied nervously.

"Isn't that your wedding dress?" demanded Sarah.

"Yes, it is. I'm altering the sleeves—they never suited me."

"Oh, Ellen—so soon?"

"I have my reasons for—that is," she caught herself hastily, "I have a perfect right to alter my clothes if I like, and I'd be obliged to you if you wouldn't keep throwing my husband's death in my face every time you speak."

Ellen spoke rapidly and with a forced indignation assumed to hide an extreme nervousness of manner.

Sarah pounced on her. "You have reasons, eh? Ellen Thorpe—for I'll not call you Ellen Witherspoon again—what are you planning to do? What are you hiding from me? Ellen, you are not going to this thing tonight. Surely you're not. *Ellen?*"

Ellen trembled before her sister, but she controlled her shaking hands as best she might and made the attempt of continuing her sewing. Her voice had none of the dignity she imagined she gave it. "Professor Plough, if you want to know, has asked me to read certain passages from 'Hiawatha' while tableaux are taking place on the stage. I shall, of course, be behind the scenes." She avoided the look of horror on Sarah's face.

"And you—in your wedding dress—with your husband not cold in his grave—are going to that place! *I forbid you to do it!*"

"I have promised."

"Promised a cheap actor-man!"

"He is a true artist—and he looks so like Arnold."

"How dare you mention that name, Ellen! He is not like him. Oh, his looks, yes! But his nasty, sleek ways, his flat, silly voice—they're not *his*. Arnold was an educated, fine, splendid man. This popinjay—this—Oh, you never loved Arnold!"

"But you did." Ellen said it slyly.

"Oh!"

"If you feel so bad, why didn't you marry him yourself?" Ellen taunted.

"I did love him!" Sarah Thorpe cried passionately. "And I love him yet."

"But he never loved *you*. He loved *me*," Ellen flung at her cruelly.

"Ellen, Ellen, how can you?"

"How can I? How can you? He was a good man. I respected him and I married him—took him away from you. He's dead now. You can have him back." She laughed hysterically.

"You are crazy!"

"No, you're crazy!"

Both were talking in high, over-

strained tones. The wild sound of her voice suddenly subdued Sarah. "Perhaps it is as well," she said quietly, "that the truth has come out at last. 'You took him away from me,' you say. Oh, you never did that! He is mine—he was always mine. 'You can have him back,' you say. I'll keep him forever in my heart."

Ellen cowered before the awful earnestness of the woman standing over her. She hid her face.

"All I ask of you now," continued Sarah, "is to think of our good name and keep it decent. I beg of you not to go to this place tonight."

Ellen sullenly stared at the dress on her knees. At last she looked up defiantly. "I shall go. I promised him I'd come."

Her sister turned quickly and left the room. As she went she took the key from the inside of the door, and, shutting it resolutely, locked it, leaving Ellen a prisoner.

V

AT ten that night Sarah unlocked the door. Save to put food inside she had not approached her sister since morning. Indeed, she did not know quite why she was going to her now. The place was deserted. On a pin-cushion she found a note. With a sickening sensation at heart she read it. It seemed as she scanned it that she must have seen it before.

DEAR SARAH:

When you read this I shall be gone with the man I love. I hope you will not make a fuss about it. I was drawn to him first by his resemblance to Arnold. I respected Arnold, but never truly loved him with all the passion I am capable of. Chauncey has all the qualities that I respected in Arnold, but he has much more. To me he is a perfect god. He has the artistic temperament and understands me. He is very affectionate, which Arnold was not. You may think it strange that we have fallen in love so soon, but we loved at first sight—affinity of soul, Chauncey calls it.

We are going to have an artistic career together. Our talents will be combined in what we think will be almost perfect art.

I am sorry to leave you, but you have acted very queerly to me. I forgive you for locking me in, for "love laughs at locksmiths." And I wish you would send me my clothes when you hear from me where I shall be. Good-bye to you and mother.

ELLEN.

Sarah held on giddily to a chair. Curiously enough, for the instant, she felt a vast peace fall on her. "Mine, mine, mine, all mine now," she whis-

pered. Downstairs she heard her mother wailing. "My son, why doesn't my big son come home?"

In a flash the dreadful shame of it all came over Sarah Thorpe. She fled from the room wildly. "Oh, God, if I'm not too late!" she cried. "Oh, I must get her home. I must, I must, I must! Oh, God, help me to get her back!"



AN UNFORTUNATE LOAN

"I'M through, I'm good and through," asserted Gofften, with vehement bitterness. "The next man who taps me, expecting a gentle flow of the milk of human kindness, is going to be deluged by a torrent of infusion of gall and wormwood triple distilled. Hereafter I've an ear deaf to the most piteous appeal. From now on I'm a flinty-hearted miser impervious to the 'touch.' My sympathies are dead, my generosity is defunct, and my pocketbook forever shut to all but myself. You hear me!"

"What's gone wrong now?" I asked.

"I'm an outcast and expatriate from my own home and fireside," declared Gofften acridly. "My wife regards me as an apostate, a renegade and a traitor actively giving aid and comfort to her enemies; her mother is convinced that I am an abandoned character deliberately plotting to destroy her daughter's peace and happiness; my children, more charitably, look upon me simply as a weak-minded, easy-going, slipshod, spineless imbecile; and it's all because I lent Rivalton fifty dollars."

"That's a good deal of a row for a small loan to kick up," I observed incredulously.

"It is," admitted Gofften sadly. "But the result was peculiar. It seems," he explained, "that some milliner has had on exhibition in her window lately a hat of such fabulous beauty that every woman in town went wild over it. My beloved wife fell under its spell like the rest, and my devoted family banded itself together to extract the price from me, kindly if they could, forcibly if they must. Everything was ready for the assault to take place after an unusually good dinner one night, but I, totally unconscious of the fell design, had listened good-naturedly to a doleful tale of woe Rivalton told me that afternoon, and lent him my last fifty. Surrounded, subdued, all but subjugated that night, I in desperation told my importunate family what I had done with my money, as an excuse for my dollarless condition; but even then there was no cessation of hostilities until I capitulated unconditionally and promised to raise the money somehow the next day."

"Well," I asked, as he paused to sigh wretchedly, "why wasn't that just as satisfactory?"

"Because," replied Gofften, from the depths of gloom, "the very next morning Mrs. Rivalton appeared on the streets arrayed in the identical hat, and that that's where my fifty went is the unalterable belief of my desolated family, myself included."

ALEX. RICKETTS.

OLD ROSES

SPIRIT of old-time roses, when the glow
 Of eventide steals softly through the trees
 Like rosy petals falling, and the breeze
 Grows hushed until it sings a love-song, low
 And sweet and tender, then I seem to know
 You too are somewhere near and watching these
 Last wondrous sights of day—God's mysteries
 We used to watch together long ago.

And, like a benediction, happiness
 Fills all my soul, as if a wandering breath
 From that high heaven had wafted down to me—
 As if I felt again your dear caress
 And knew you to be waiting e'er in death,
 Crowned with the roses of eternity.

THOMAS S. JONES, JR.



A SUBWAY CONVERSATION

"I HEAR that Mrs. Avenoo is planning a stunning ball."
 "Yes, one has to bawl to be heard in these trains."
 "No, it's too cold to rain. Might snow!"
 "I don't think they're slow. Pretty rapid!"
 "What?"
 "Yes, it is hot down here!"
 "Beer? No, I never drink!"
 "What is it?"
 "Visit? Who?"
 "I don't understand, but any time——"
 "I have just ten o'clock!"
 "No, two blocks! Well, here's my station."
 "Good-bye! Glad we had this talk."
 "So am I. Good-bye."

EDWIN STANLEY.



DEGREES

DOLLY—That girl told awful fibs about me.
 POLLY—You're lucky, dear. She might have told the truth.

THE FACE

By Stephen Chalmers

IN a part of the West Side of New York City, called the Latin Quarter because of the actors, musicians and so-called "bohemian" restaurants, until a year ago there lived François Pille-Grue. Where François is now I do not know, but I have heard that he is in an asylum for the care of the insane. Mimi is dead; and the Face is probably still grinning in the attic, for, much as the weeping Madame Tascherau would like to rent that very airy apartment, she has never had the courage to open the door, which closed for the last time when they carried Mimi to a wagon and led François, babbling, to an ambulance.

When François arrived in New York City two years ago he was a slight, sharp, Parisian youth, with deep-set, glowing eyes and an air of supreme enthusiasm. For two dollars a week he was permitted to occupy a spacious attic in the lodging-house of Madame Tascherau. When François engaged the attic he said that he was "alone at present," but would need the room. Was he about to be married? No, he had no time to waste on love. Did he expect relatives to help him fill that attic? No, he had not a relation or friend in the world. Might he be going to work there? Oh, no, no, no, no! This most earnestly, as if he wished his denial to be remembered.

Madame Tascherau would have liked to know to what use a young Frenchman with no relatives, no friends, no money and no trade was going to put that spacious attic, but François was not to be drawn on the subject. And he paid his rent regularly. For three months he acted like an honest, in-

dustrious youth, anxious to make his way in a strange land. True, he had some peculiarities. For instance, although he was employed as a waiter by Joe Leffanti, who did a fine spaghetti-and-red-wine *table d'hôte* business on the corner, François seemed to spend all his earnings, after he had paid two dollars' rent to Madame Tascherau, in purchasing peculiarly-shaped pieces of fine, flexible canvas.

One day Madame Tascherau's curiosity overcame her. François had left the door of the attic open, which was an unusual circumstance. Madame Tascherau tiptoed to the door. It was ajar. She paused, for the silence of the attic and the mystery of its absent tenant filled her with a sudden, superstitious dread. She was like Fatima at the door of the forbidden chamber. But Madame Tascherau, when she summoned courage enough to peep in, saw no collection of dripping heads or other gruesome things. All that she discovered out of the ordinary was a collection of pieces of canvas, and these were spread flat all over the floor, without any apparent design. Madame Tascherau endeavored to place a few pieces together into the possible semblance of a sail or a shoe-upper, or even a pair of trousers.

She failed in determining for what the pieces were intended. Then she closed the door and went back to her housework and forgot all about the matter until François, returning late in the evening, brought it up by a yell of dismay, rage and terror.

"Robbair!" he shrieked. "Call ze police!"

Madame Tascherau inquired. Fran-

çois shrieked again and pointed to the pieces of canvas on the floor.

"Zey have been touch!" he cried, breaking into wild sobs.

Then Madame Tascherau explained. François stopped weeping and drove her out of the attic. Madame also wept in the arms of her daughter Mimi, for Madame Tascherau came of the ancient family of Roche-Corbon, and was, therefore, sensitive.

Now, Mimi, the daughter, a lissome, attractive Tourainian of eighteen years, was a tactful little woman. Seeing her aristocratic mother inconsolable, she bearded François in his den.

"M'sieu'," she said in her soft Tourainian, "you are too hasty. My mother loves you and I love you, too, M'sieu' François, for you are so young and so all alone in this big city. My mother, finding your door open, came to see if she could mend your socks or brush your hat or fold your clothes, M'sieu' François, for you are so all alone in this big city. My mother thought these things were to make something which needed sewing, and I can sew well, M'sieu' François. My mother is very sorry, and I am to tell you that I sew very well, M'sieu' François."

Now, while she was speaking François was looking at her, his anger visibly cooling; and when she had finished François was filled with an idea.

"What is your name, if you please, ma'mselle?"

"Mimi," was the simple answer.

And that settled it. For a whole month all of Mimi's spare time was taken up in sewing together strangely shaped pieces of canvas. François gave her the pieces as he left in the morning and got them back sewn together in the evening. He never gave her more than three pieces at one time; usually only two; but when it was the greater number his hands would tremble and he would spend five minutes explaining how they should be sewn together and impressing upon Mimi the importance of making the hem just so big, no wider, no narrower. On the day when three pieces were involved

he would rush into the house in the evening like a mad thing, snatch the canvas from Mimi's hand and glare at it. If it was just as he had wished he would laugh and dance and clap his hands, then dash upstairs to his attic, lock himself in; and after that only a ray of candlelight from the keyhole would mark a living presence in the attic. But when Mimi made a slight error in the sewing he would moan, rave, stamp his feet and clutch his hair until Madame Tascherau and mademoiselle thought he must be going mad. And Mimi would have to pick out her stitches and do the work over again.

For this arduous service François paid Mimi fifty cents every Saturday, and because the pay was small and François a hard taskmaster, Mimi fell in love with her strange employer, and worked for love. After that there were few mistakes, for Mimi's love gave her fingers a light touch.

But, although every morning her face flushed and her eyes brightened when he burst into the room with his canvas pieces, François was blind to the beauty of little Mimi, and the tale that her face told Madame Tascherau. He seemed to be wrapped up in himself and some great ambition. When he praised her Mimi's eyes would droop; when he stamped and raved Mimi's face would become pale with agony, and she would lift a pair of pleading orbs to his. Yet he lived on in ignorance of the treasure that was his.

About this time François developed a new craze. No longer did he bring home pieces of canvas, but, instead, his pockets full of springs—springs of all sizes, from watch springs to bed springs. These he would immediately take to his room. And the ray of candlelight through the keyhole used to meet the dawn on the stairway in those days.

One morning François came down, haggard after an all-night session in the attic, and laid two large pieces of canvas on Mimi's lap. Each piece was made up of pieces she had sewn together previously. This time he

spent fifteen minutes telling Mimi how to put them together. Then he went into the street and came back in two minutes to give the instructions all over again.

"And, Mimi," he said, when he had finished, "if it is well done I shall take you to dinner with me this evening, for this is a great night in my life, Mimi."

Poor little Mimi! How she worked that day; with what care she drew every stitch; how she wept when she made a fault and wept again because a tear had fallen on the precious canvas! And his words sang through her heart.

And if it were well done, she—little Mimi—would dine with François, whom she loved as her life and who knew it not. What would he say to her? Would he talk about canvas pieces? Or would he ask her about herself? Or talk about things they both knew in Paris? You see, it meant so much to little Mimi, who loved him, for he had never spoken a word to her that was not about pieces of canvas.

So she dreamed, with the result that when François dashed into the room, his deep-set eyes afire with enthusiasm, he gave only one glance at the sewing; then he raved and stamped and shrieked. And poor little Mimi, instead of going to dinner, buried her face in her pillow and wept all night.

In the morning he came again and, seeing her red eyes, seemed surprised and shocked. He had not meant her to cry. Why had she cried? He was sorry if he had seemed ungrateful. He had not meant to wound her. It was his way, and it meant so much to him—to have the pieces of canvas properly sewn together.

Mimi took cheer from his evident sorrow at her misery, and when he told her that "the great night in his life" actually depended upon her sewing those pieces together just as they should be done she was quite happy. And, oh, she was supremely happy when François came home, and in the enthusiasm of finding that she had done her work perfectly, gathered her in his arms and kissed her!

Happy little Mimi! Madame Tasch-
erau wept when she saw her go down-
stairs with François, radiant with joy
and more beautiful than ever in a
cheap but Parisianly dainty gown.

He took her to Joe Leffanti's.

"I thought you worked here?" said Mimi.

"I did," said François proudly; "but tonight I am a customer. From now on I will work in the attic and you shall help me, Mimi."

He did not talk canvas pieces all the time, for now and then he mysteriously referred to "springs," large springs, little springs, bed springs, watch springs. But what did Mimi care? She listened with "heart on her lips and soul within her eyes" to all his talk, for she was to help him in his work, he had said. It was on her tongue to say "our work, François," but modesty forbade.

That night—it was the "great night" in his life—François drank more wine than he usually did. He was merry and wildly enthusiastic and a little confiding.

"It will be finished in three days, Mimi; then I will reward you with a sight that no other eyes may see until the time is ripe."

And when he parted with her at the door of her mother's apartments he took her gently in his arms and kissed her tenderly on the lips.

"You have been so kind and so patient, Mimi."

And Mimi passed another sleepless night and wept in her pillow, too—but for joy in the memory of that kiss.

Next morning he came down with more pieces of canvas—seven pieces to be sewn together. The mass was now assuming the size of a bedquilt, but the shape of nothing that Mimi could make out, except that in the centre there was a sort of blind alley.

François wore an anxious look. His mind was concentrated on some mysterious thing, and his deep-set eyes glowed like slumbering fire. He seemed to have forgotten all about his proposed business partnership with Mimi, and he seemed to have forgotten all

about the kiss. He made no reference, either, to the little outing of the previous night. And Mimi was puzzled.

But she did her work well, and in the evening he thanked her, yet not with his usual gaiety; rather he seemed as one who stands on the eve of battle with all his plans laid and grave suspense in the camp.

He returned to the attic and Mimi was left alone with her mother. Madame Tascherau was cheerful, or tried to be; but Mimi was silent. After her mother retired, the girl, white in her night-robe, softly stole from the apartments and crept up to the attic door. The ray of candlelight warned her back. At midnight she repeated the visit. The ray was still there. An hour before dawn it was still there. Then Mimi went back to bed and slept from exhaustion.

Next day François did not appear, nor the next. Mimi took her dinner plate upstairs, laid it at the door of the attic and tapped.

"Who's there?" demanded a hoarse voice.

There was no answer, but when Mimi went back in an hour, the plate was there—empty.

On the evening of the fourth day François came out. His face was like Death, but his eyes were burning brightly and his lips wore a smile of triumph. He laid a trembling hand upon her head and, looking into her eyes, said:

"Mimi, I can trust you?"

"François," she replied, her lips quivering, "I would die sooner than betray your trust."

"Good," said he. "Until I return let no one pass up these stairs."

And Mimi sat guard on the lowest step until he came back with a large package under his arm.

"Thank you," he said abruptly and passed up to the attic.

"François!" she cried appealingly, after him.

He turned with the key in the lock of the attic door.

"Tonight," he said. "Tonight, Mimi."

Daylight passed; dusk came and went; the street lamps flared through the city; the ray of candlelight shone through the keyhole; and still Mimi sat on the lowest step.

Suddenly a yell burst out in the attic. Then there was a sound of someone laughing, dancing and singing:

*"Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!"*

There was a scurrying of feet; the door of the attic swung open and an excited voice cried in the dark stairway:

"Mimi! Mimi! Mimi!"

"I am here, François," she said.

"Come, Mimi! It is finished, Mimi! It is finished!"

She was by his side in a moment. He seized her roughly and pulled her into the room, closing the door behind her and locking it.

"Look, Mimi, look!" he whispered tensely, pointing to a corner of the room where something huge rose up, somber and massy.

"What is it, François?" she whispered, gripping his arm fearfully.

"Wait!" he said.

He ran to a spot a little to the left of the black mass. Presently a strong ray of calcium-light shone through a flesh-colored pane of glass and showed that whatever the thing was it was covered with a dark bedspread.

"Now, Mimi!" he cried in suppressed tones of triumph, as he gripped a corner of the spread. He jerked it off.

"The Face of François!" he announced dramatically.

Mimi started back with a cry, part terror, part pleasure, part admiration. Before her stood an exact likeness of the face of François. From the distance to which she had retreated in the first shock of discovery, and with the pink calcium-light shining upon it, the Face looked as natural as François's own. But it measured six feet from chin to crown and four feet from ear to ear.

With her eyes staring, her mouth open and her hands clasped under her chin the girl crept up closer. Now she understood what all her work had

been for. Every feature of the Face was formed of canvas, every seam corresponded with a natural line of the face.

A tight-fitting cap was painted on the skull. The eyes were of glass, but their color was that of François's eyes and the deep setting was perfect.

"Oh, François," she cried. "It is wonderful—wonderful!"

"Bah!" he sneered. "Do you think, girl, that I made a likeness of myself, merely to be looked at? Stand back and watch."

Terrified by his wild manner, Mimi shrank to the other end of the attic. When she turned to look François had vanished.

"François! François!" she screamed in sudden terror. "Oh, where are you, François!"

"I am here," François's natural voice replied, but with the words the monstrosity's lips moved and the head bowed, while the smile of François illumined the Face.

Mimi uttered a scream of terror, and fell to the floor, swooning.

When she regained consciousness François was bending over her with a look of the utmost alarm in his face.

"Is this you, François?" she whispered faintly; "really you?"

"Yes, Mimi; what made you scream?"

"It—the Face, François. It moved and laughed just like you, but oh, so much bigger. And I couldn't see you anywhere."

"I—I just went behind to make it work—to show you, Mimi," said François, who had been frightened back to his normal senses by the incident.

He slipped an arm around her neck and, raising her head, placed it upon his knee. His left arm he flung around her waist to support her back. Mimi closed her eyes. By-and-bye he kissed her quietly on the forehead. She opened her eyes and smiled.

"Your Face could not look so frightened as you did, François," she said, a little coquettishly.

"Of course it could," said François, lifting her to her feet. He was a little nettled at the challenge and a little

angry because he half-suspected that Mimi had been shamming half of her sickness.

"There is nothing that Face cannot do unless it is something my own face cannot. See!"

He disappeared behind the great head and presently the Face, which had been regarding the little love scene in the corner with a set stare, looked at Mimi with an expression of dismay. The mouth corners drooped; the lines from the corners of the eyes across the cheeks became drawn into lugubrious shadows; the eyes opened wide, and between the eyebrows the canvas wrinkled into lines of anxiety.

"I am sorry you were frightened, Mimi," said François's voice. And the ensemble was so perfect that Mimi could have sworn the words issued from the moving lips of the Face.

She clapped her hands and cried out that François himself had looked just as lugubrious. The conceit of the inventor may have been wounded, for suddenly the Face curled and twisted and puckered into an expression of malice. The eyebrows lifted and the eyes gleamed in the calcium-light. Mimi put her hands to her face and turned away with a cry of horror.

"Oh, no, no, no, François! You could never look like that!"

Yet she knew he could, for she had seen his face take on that expression when he stamped and raved and tore his hair over the canvas pieces.

François laughed and the Face looked down upon Mimi with a softened expression. The voice of its master whispered through the moving lips:

"I would not look at you to frighten you, for I love you, Mimi."

Mimi felt the blood rush from her heart to her head and back again. Oh, the love that shone from the Face as the words came from the lips! She put her hand to her breast, as if to still the beating of her heart.

"Oh, François!" she faltered; then, unable longer to look upon the passionate glory of the Face, her eyes drooped and the lashes quivered on the crimsoned cheeks.

When François stepped from behind the Face he had only to reach out his hands and Mimi would have poured her heart into them. But he made no sign. He did not love her. He was spurred to this intimacy only by that enthusiasm which always seeks an outlet.

"Well, Mimi?" he cried breathlessly.

"It is wonderful, François," was all she said.

There was silence.

"Is that all you have to say?" cried François irritably. He was visibly disappointed.

"Oh, no!" she cried suddenly; "but what I have to ask may make you angry. I want you to show me how it is worked, François. Show me how you made it laugh, smile, frown, rage, weep, François. It is so wonderful that I must understand."

"Ah, good!" he cried. "It is so wonderful that you must understand. Then I am successful, Mimi. People will pay to see it."

Then he showed her the inside of the head, which was spacious enough to contain a man and the works. The latter was a maze of levers and springs of all sizes and shapes. Here was a thin bar of steel down the ridge of the nose, and the movement of every nerve-spring around the mouth, the eyes and the nostrils influenced the steel, so that the nose curved in pride, relaxed in placid regard, contracted in contempt.

The springs and their connections with one another were, to Mimi—as they would have seemed to anyone—a marvel of ingenuity. By the application of a slight weight to a huge spring which dangled from the top of the skull, a whole combination of springs, affected in sympathy, drew up the lines of the Face into an expression of amazed incredulity. The works were one great series of simple combinations and complicated combinations.

Mimi was delighted. Her enthusiasm stirred whatever kind of gratitude existed in the heart of François Pille-Grue. He caught her in his arms and,

recalling all her patience and fidelity, cried:

"Mimi, I have shown you this, my masterpiece, because I trust you. If others see it they may steal it. I must now be absent much to negotiate, to—to—things you would not understand, Mimi. But I leave you in charge. Let no one enter this room. You must come in every hour of the day to see that the Face of François is safe. Lock the door always—aye, even when you come in, Mimi. You will do this, Mimi? Can I trust you, Mimi?"

"Indeed you can," said Mimi in a whisper, for the arms of François were around her.

"Now, there," said François, satisfied, and he rewarded her with a kiss.

But Mimi did not like that kiss. There was something gnawing at her heart, a truth knocking at the door of her soul. He had kissed her, not because he loved her for herself, but because she had praised his invention. And she was not happy.

For two days she obeyed François's instructions. Every hour she stole upstairs, unlocked the door of the attic, locked it from the inside, and gazed upon the Face. At first it frightened her to be alone with the monster, but gradually her fears diminished, for, unlike the countenance of the real François, the Face did not scowl when she looked at it for more than a second. And to Mimi's imagination and to her starving heart it seemed that the Face was sometimes on the verge of a smile.

One day she made so bold as to manipulate one of the combinations, as she had seen François do it. But the Face scowled so terribly that she hurriedly released the springs and rushed from the room in terror. She dreamed all night about that scowl, and was haunted by it all next day, until she felt that unless she saw the Face smile she would go mad. She worked several combinations, and at last succeeded in bringing to the monstrous countenance that expression of passionate yearning which, once be-

fore, had lowered her quivering lashes to her burning cheeks.

In the meantime François came and went. It is probable that he spent his time arranging his patents, and negotiating with theatrical managers for the exhibition of his strange invention. Sometimes he came with a hopeful look in his eyes, at other times with that scowl which terrified Mimi. And not a word of love, or even a cold kiss, did she win from him for her fidelity.

The day after the Face had smiled upon her François went out with a sullen brow, having previously scolded her for leaving the attic door unlocked. His rebuke stabbed her to the heart. Her hungry heart longed for the food of love. She made the Face smile again and stood before it for an hour, happy in a dream that it was the real face of her beloved François. Later in the day she came again, and when the Face smiled she talked to it and called it "François, my beloved." And she knelt to it and pleaded mercy for her starving heart. And the Face appeared to understand. The gloaming of its eyes seemed to deepen and the lines around its mouth to soften still more.

Next day Mimi spent three hours with the Face. She teased it. Then she made it look jealous by a clever combination of anger, anxiety and a weak smile. She teased it more and made it look angry. The Face blazed with anger. Mimi laughed coquettishly and said: "My poor François! I have displeased you." Then she made the Face smile down upon her with the soft expression and the gloaming in its eyes; and she knelt before it and asked forgiveness.

For the next few days she was seldom seen by her mother. Madame Tascherau, of course, wept; but she knew Mimi's secret and let things take their course, hoping for the best. And, of course, Mimi always left the attic when François entered it.

Then one evening the love of Mimi came to the knowledge of François, but in a strange way. He came home, tired and disappointed, and went to

his attic. At the door he paused. He heard the voice of Mimi within, and she was saying in low, passionate tones:

"François, François, if you could only speak. I long to hear you say, 'I love you, Mimi—I love you.' But I can see in your eyes that you *do* love me, François, and little Mimi is satisfied just to be near you, François."

François burst into the room. Mimi was kneeling before the Face with tears in her eyes and her hands stretched out in appeal to the monster, which was looking down upon her, smiling the contentment of love requited.

When she saw that she was discovered, Mimi burst into wild sobs and flung herself at the feet of François.

"What is this mummery?" cried he, amazed.

"François—François!" she cried.

He knelt down and gathered her in his arms. It was all so dramatic, and so it appealed to François.

"Tell me, little Mimi—tell François. I heard what you were saying."

"I couldn't—help it," sobbed Mimi, burying her face in his shoulder. "You do—not love me. You never smile. You—scowl and scowl. Oh, François, I would die to make you smile."

François stared up at the Face. It seemed to be sneering over him. A wave of jealousy burned through the heart of François. He bent his face close to Mimi's.

"I love—Mimi, I love you!" he whispered passionately.

Then there was silence. And Mimi was supremely happy.

And François was happy, too. Next day he kissed Mimi tenderly, and went into the city with a light heart, for he knew now that he had loved Mimi from the day when she came to excuse her mother's curiosity. They were all happy, in fact; and Madame Tascherau wept.

In a few days, however, a change came over Mimi. She grew pale and her eyes were filled with a light that puzzled Madame Tascherau and François. She ate very little. That love was not the food she now sought was

obvious to François, whose kisses she received with a strange, cold contempt. Only once did she brighten, and that was when François brought home a number of colored glass panes in a slide-frame in acceptance of a suggestion which Mimi had made about the illumination of the Face. Mimi pointed out that the dramatic effects of the Face could be heightened by changes of color as well as expression. A red light upon the monster's rage would be more striking, a green light upon its jealousy, a blue light upon its misery, a rose light upon its love and the ordinary flesh light upon its expressions of repose.

François was highly delighted at the success which attended the experiment of Mimi's suggestion. Mimi was delighted, too, but when François in his enthusiasm tried to kiss her she angrily broke away from him and ran to her mother's apartment.

François was puzzled; so was Madame Tascherau. The latter confided in the former, who was about to be one of the illustrious family of Roche-Carbon. She told him something which had been going on for days. The moment he left the house, she said, Mimi went to the attic, locked herself in and remained there all day, only leaving when it was time for François to return. And what alarmed Madame Tascherau to copious tears, Mimi was visibly wasting away. What was to be done?

"Call a doctor," said François; "but remember, not a word about the Face."

The doctor said Mimi was consumptive, always had been, in fact. He asked if there was anything preying upon her mind. There might be, François interposed; nobody could tell.

François spoke to Mimi about the thing that was now gnawing at his heart—unrequited love. His first words plainly showed that he was jealous—jealous of his own Face!

Mimi laughed.

"I do not love you, François, any more," she said calmly. "Now I understand you. You are utterly selfish. I do not love you."

"Then we will part," said François, hoping to stir any love which might remain in her heart.

"Very well," said Mimi indifferently.

"Give me the key of the attic."

She turned upon him like a she-wolf.

"Give you the key of the attic!" she hissed. "Not while I can keep it."

A knife seemed to cut through the heart of François.

"Then," he said slowly and significantly, "I will take away the Face."

Mimi gasped; she clutched her left side and reeled against the wall. Then she glared upon him.

"Not while I have the key and can tear the Face to pieces!" she said through her teeth. "It is as much mine as yours. I made the Face with my own fingers—all for love of you, François. Then you treated me like a stone, when I was wearing my life away for you—you!—pigmy!"

François left the house and went to the famous Tenderloin police station, that vortex of all strange happenings in the Latin Quarter. He told the police that he had paid all his dues at the lodging-house and that, for no apparent reason, Mimi Tascherau detained his goods and chattels.

When François left the house Mimi reeled upstairs and entered the attic. When François came with a policeman the door was locked and Madame Tascherau was standing outside weeping.

"She is mad! She is mad!" she wailed. "Oh, my little Mimi!"

From within came a strange voice, "like woman wailing for her demon lover," yet in the tones there was a plaintive sweetness that stirred all the selfish love in the soul of François.

"François! François!" cried Mimi, within. "I came to kill you, François, but, oh, how can I kill you when you smile on me like that! I will make you angry, François, then—then—"

There was silence. François put out his hand to slip his key in the lock, but the policeman, who had heard the word "kill," gripped the

little Parisian by the wrist, and bent his head to listen. Mimi's voice sounded again.

"Ah, now you are angry, François. Oh—oh—François, do not scowl like that! I cannot bear it—I cannot! *Mon Dieu*, I cannot! Smile again, François, smile again—only once—then I will kiss you and—and kill you. Ah, now you love me again. And I love you, François, and I hate that little pigmy—"

There was a queer sob and a sound of something lightly falling. François hurled himself against the door. The lock broke and he rushed inside. The policeman stopped in the doorway and vented a gasp of amazement. Madame Tascheriau gave one glance and fled, shrieking, to her own apartments.

Mimi lay on her face with her arms stretched out before the monster. A shaft of rose light from the calcium burner fell across the Face, which arose,

smiling and contented, over the little Tourainian.

François, frantic, and the policeman, amazed, raised Mimi's face.

"Dead!" said the policeman.

François bounded to his feet with a shriek and confronted the Face.

"Dead! dead! dead!" he screamed.

"Oh, you—you—you—"

In the frenzy of the moment he struck the smiling Face with his clenched fist. There came a resonant click. The Face suddenly contorted into an expression of the most diabolical rage. The policeman uttered a hoarse cry. François burst into a peal of laughter, and rushing to the calcium-light turned a fiery red ray upon the monster's gleaming eyes and twisted countenance.

"The Face of François!" he yelled.

Then he threw his arms around the policeman's neck and trolled a silly song of the Parisian Latin Quarter.



A RECOMMENDATION

SHOPPER—Is this perfume strong?

LANGUID SHOPGIRL—Yes, madam. We guarantee that the odor can be perceived in a motor-car.



THE IMPORTANT PART

MILLICENT—I'm in love with both of them. Which would you advise me to marry?

HORTENSE—Whichever one asks you.



HE—Don't bother me. I am trying to collect my thoughts.

SHE—But I can't wait forever!

"MIGHT HAVE!"

I HAVE lived my life, and I face the end—
 But that other life I might have led?
 Where lay the road, and who was its friend;
 And what was the goal, when the years were fled?

Where lay the road? Did I miss the turn?
 The friend unknown? Our greetings unsaid?
 And the goal unsought? Shall I never learn
 What was that life I might have led?

As the spring's last look, for one dear day
 From skies autumnal on earth may bend,
 So lures me that other life—but, nay!
 I have lived my life, and I face the end.

EDITH M. THOMAS.



EXPRESSIONS OF A PRIMA DONNA

AMERICA is delightful!
 Yes, football is too rough.
 New York is wonderful, magnificent!
 American women are the most beautiful and charming on earth.
 Nothing is better for the complexion than Smearine.
 The tones of the Pianoleon are exquisite.
 I always take Doperine for headaches.
 Eau de Swash is the finest hair tonic.
 The Gasomobile is the best made.
 Denticide is excellent for the teeth.
 I can't breakfast without Boneless Oats.
 N. G. Corsets are the only proper ones.
 Never travel without Sneezerine for coughs and colds.
 I fervently recommend Scrubolio.
 By all means try Nervosis.
 Yes, this is positively my last season on the stage.
 I expect to get the decree next week.



DURING courtship a woman wants the last kiss; after marriage, the last word.

IN BLUEBEARD'S CLOSET

By Virginia Woodward Cloud

THE letters of the printed slip stared up at me, where it had fallen upon the desk, and my hands lay nervelessly in my lap. The appalling stillness seemed a fitting background for the words, and somewhere, on the darkness of that black night, a bell struck ten.

I had been very ill; my baby girl had lived only a few hours, and afterward, convalescence was so slow and weakness so prolonged, that when the nurses left, the mirror showed me habitually the somber eyes of a wan face, whose hair was too heavy for its head, and whose white kimono was miles too large.

Max did not like black. Few men do; in their more robust contact with the world they experience less need for an outward sign of inward seclusion. This had proved something of a grievance, but perhaps the continual care of self, during illness, makes for self-absorption, and who, even the most unselfish, has not known irritation to be trouble, provocation to grow into pain, and one's love to become one's cross, under the exaggerated lens of the imagination?

Twice a week Max attended a meeting of county commissioners in a neighboring borough, and these evenings I had customarily spent alone. It seemed quite inevitable and right while I was well, but now I felt myself a lonely and somewhat neglected wife; yet in the saner moments of health I knew that no young woman possessed a less neglectful husband.

Now, however, several months of illness and racked nerves had completed their sad work, and I saw Max

torn by anxiety, yet under a strain, day and night, caused by his already heavy practice, combined with the demands of a coming election, in which he had been nominated for a judgeship.

I was forced to see him go in the morning, with a quick kiss, and to lie still evening after evening, while he worked and studied alone in the library, with no wife near to respond to an occasional word. I grew to fretting over him, with probably a querulous complaint thrown in about his lack of care for himself.

On the morning of this night, of which I now shall tell, Max came softly to the bedside after his breakfast to say that he could not return for dinner.

"Rundade again, or the old election?" I asked.

"A little of both," said he. "I address a political meeting in the courthouse there tonight, and cannot get home until midnight. How are you today, Eve?"

"Oh, as well as can be expected," I answered a little coldly. "One naturally wearies of one's own society."

"Poor little girl! Never mind," he bent to kiss my cheek, "Dr. Jim says you will be out soon now. Then you'll enjoy your friends more than ever."

He went out softly and I hid my face in the pillow. Oh, Max, Max! Could you not know that I wanted only one in the world? Then, with the foolish absorption of that selfishness which will not allow anything to come between it and the object of its devotion, I cried silently until Johanna brought my breakfast-tray.

But Johanna, the best and most reserved of Swedes, was accustomed to my tears, which did not appeal to her as tragedy. Another long, listless day was dragged through, with self too languid for occupation, or for interest in my boy's prattle when he returned from the kindergarten with Greta. There was no friend for whom I wished to send; a sore heart and depressed spirit find no solace in compulsory conversation.

At last when bedtime came, and Johanna was knitting before the nursery fire, I dragged myself into the library with the vague intention of resting in Max's great chair until he came—a proceeding which would have met with firm denial on the part of Johanna. There was a low fire and I sat looking at the clock, and wondering at the untidiness of the desk, which no one, except myself, ever dared set straight.

A masculine hand had thrust the papers aside with ruthless haste: briefs, letters, packages, foolscap. I grew interested in arranging them. The drawers were usually locked and kept for Max's private papers. Now a key was sticking in one which I opened and proceeded to make tidy in a desultory way. Several packages of letters and papers lay there, and on one my own name stared up at me, in my husband's clear handwriting: "The Duruth Case."

Under its rubber band was slipped a newspaper cutting, so that I could not fail to read it:

Privately, on the 12th instant, by the Rev. August Dalrymple, Alice H. Lee to Maxwell Duruth.

That was all.

"Alice H. Lee to Maxwell Duruth," my lips were forming the words coldly over and over, and then "Eve Lessing to Maxwell Duruth." My hands moved over the package of letters beside it. They were all in the immature writing of a very young woman, and I opened them, as if looking on at one who a short time before had been myself.

They were all dated from Helmuth

City, Montana, nearly fifteen years before. Fifteen years! A whole lifetime in which Max had lived before he knew me; whereas, my life commenced only after I knew him. This came to me afterward; then my brain was working with strange mechanism, but fiercely and determined to know all.

They were profoundly devoted letters and all commenced, "My dearest husband" or "My darling Max"—words which I read with so strong a sense of solitary possession that afterward I recalled how drily she laughed—that one who sat reading them, opening letter after letter with cold, steady hands and brain of fire. She told him that she loved him so, the woman who signed herself "Your devoted wife, Alice Duruth." She implored him not to leave her, that if he would remain separated from her not to make her divorce him; that she would always forgive him.

Forgive him! Apparently Maxwell Duruth had not been a model of constancy in his first youth.

She who sat reading these letters put them back with precision, locked the drawer and slightly disarranged the desk. Then she dragged from the room that which seemed the dead self of happy Eve Duruth. With each slow, halting step, a hand against the wall for support, her dry, unconscious lips repeated, "His wife—Alice Duruth."

She closed her door, that dazed, benumbed creature, and went to the light as one battling through the dark toward understanding, and there met the white death-mask of her own face staring at her with wide eyes of horror. Then she spoke aloud because she understood.

"She said separated—only separated—only separated. If she is Alice Duruth, who are you? Why, you are only Eve Lessing!"

Then how she laughed as she fell into the darkness!

I lay upon the bed with Dr. Jim's fingers on my pulse and Johanna saying, while she bathed my head:

"I come to know if madam will go to bed, and she lie here on the floor like the death. So frightened am I that I make that Greta tell you quick by the telephoon!"

Dr. Jim was giving me a spoonful of stimulant.

"That's right, Mrs. Duruth! Max will be along presently. You stayed up too long and grew a trifle weak, I fancy."

Max! It all came flooding back, that icy wave of fear which had enveloped me, and I seized Dr. Jim's hand.

"Don't tell him! Not tonight. I only fainted. Don't tell him!"

Dr. Jim looked disapproval. He was Max's trusted friend, but when I persisted he consented at last and left me to Johanna, after a word of warning. Johanna moved about grumbling softly over madams who took so little care of themselves, and by-and-bye I feigned sleep. Fortunately extreme physical weakness brings its stupor-like repose of exhaustion, and the night was a benumbed blank of semi-unconscious slumber.

In the morning I aroused to hear Max's voice at the door and Johanna's murmur of refusal because madam slept. For the first time I was glad not to meet his eyes. Then came the closing of the front door, and I lay weakly striving to grasp that which had befallen me. I dully pieced together the facts of the case and endeavored to look at them clearly.

Incredible as it appeared to me, my husband had been married before and had not told me. That this marriage was unknown to his friends in the East, and that I had come with my father to live in the same town with Max only a few years before our marriage accounted for my ignorance of it. This was the lighter side, albeit the terrible one of deceit. The darker side was that there had been apparently only a separation, not a divorce, from the woman he had married, and there was no reason to suppose she had died. Women did not die so easily, I told myself; that blessed release remained for little children and the aged.

Feb. 1906

Had this terrible knowledge come to me during a time of physical strength, I would have denied my own sight; have clung tenaciously to that which I knew to be Max's high code of honor—the honor upon which my faith was fastened, my soul was set and my earthly house of love was built. But the suffering of extreme weakness, especially that of weakened nerves, is prone to be a desperately credulous, self-absorbed suffering, because of the lack of physical combativeness.

Only one thing I saw clearly, that I must rally all my little will power toward immediate recovery, for my boy's sake to meet and face clearly that which lay before. To my over-wrought imagination, uncontrolled by physical strength, only the extreme result seemed possible; I foresaw the terrible interview with Max, the certain separation to come, the death of happiness and the blight upon my boy's life.

Then and there I commenced a hand-to-hand fight with weakness. When I rang with more than usual energy and ordered my bath, Johanna was radiant.

"He will be coming again," she said, always designating Max by the pronoun. "He will know how madam is before he go away some more—the poor man; 'tis thin he grows!"

A sharp pain struck through me, but I stifled it, determined to harden my heart. Hour by hour I would gain strength and shorten the time of this terrible dumb torture. When Max's step sounded later this fictitious energy died and I lay passively on the divan as if asleep. Presently he stooped and kissed my cheek.

"Eve, sweetheart, I am called away again today, but I cannot go without knowing how you are."

"Better," I said. "How long will you be gone?"

"Several days, I fear. I go on to Southgate and address another meeting at Winland. This will bring me back in time only for the election. I wish it were over, dear. Then I shall see my wife again."

His wife! I shivered and closed my eyes again as if tired.

"I don't want to go, you understand that, don't you, Eve?" His hand touched my hair helplessly as he waited.

"Oh, yes, of course," I said languidly.

I thought Max sighed as he went out, but I told myself that it was better so; it would be easier later on if I widened the breach each time. But what it meant in reality I cannot put into words. When he was gone I let my wild hour come with stormy, inevitable tears.

That afternoon Johanna thought I slept late. Afterward I caught her clear eyes upon me with something of trouble in them, and at night, while warming my *négligée* before the fire her face showing pink and comely over its top, she said abruptly:

"Madam will be well soon now for him? They iss not like us, those mens," she added to herself, yet I knew that to one of her reserve the speech was difficult. Her face turned from me as she mended the fire. "I did haf one once, in Sweden."

"You were married, Johanna?" I asked indifferently, all considerations having diminished in value before my own present experience.

"Not so much," said Johanna calmly; "not like madam. Oh, no, I wass only promised to be. But I wass a girl of foolishness then."

She proceeded to take my slippers off and rub my feet.

"He wass drowned, that man," said Johanna, as if stating a commonplace occurrence. "He wass of the large fisheries, and they haf the hard life—those fishermens, and mostly drown."

"Oh, Johanna!" I breathed, yet fearing for my own selfish sake to let human feeling speak in sympathy lest it should render me weaker. But no change passed over her placid face; the waves had broken there so long before that now the habit of stolid control could not be disturbed.

"But yes, he wass goot, too, like madam's man that iss so goot to madam."

"Why did you not marry him, Johanna?" I asked mechanically.

She shook her head.

"I wass that girl of foolishness that wass angry with hard anger for that he gave some beads to that Katrinka Grosland before he sailed once. Yet he neffaire look at that Katrinka Grosland after. Oh, it wass a foolishness to let him go with my anger upon him, for he went sorrowful, and then he drowned—that man."

"Oh, Johanna!" I whispered helplessly again.

"Madam must haf her beef-tea," said Johanna briskly, but at the boudoir door she turned, her face a shade pinker with the effort. "They are not us—those mens. They are not womans. They go and go and see many people and catch many fish. We womans we stay here and wait and wait for them and lofe them—those mens."

When the door closed there came a great longing for Max which submerged all resolution as it did a thousand times during that week of fear and doubt. Again the temptation shook me to leave all as it was, covered over, concealed, hidden, ignored, with life moving smoothly above that secret of deceit like the tide over dark wreckage—and with Max still mine.

Aye, that was the crux! Was he mine? Could I go on feigning ignorance, pretending, growing more false day by day when for his sake and that of the child, I so longed to grow fairer and better? It was impossible. That Max could do so seemed an abnormal thing. Yet I told myself over and over I had seen it with my own eyes. I determined, however, not to face Max with my discovery until after the election, which was only a few days off now, for that any trouble should handicap him at that time was not to be thought of.

Therefore I harbored every little gain of strength, much to Johanna's delight; but Dr. Jim was not so credulous. He looked upon my feverish effort with keen, perplexed eyes, and the day of Max's expected return I heard the doctor's motor-horn in the street, and he ran up to ask how I

fared. I was working upon one of the boy's white dresses, and he took a chair opposite, watching me. Presently he said:

"Max will win, Mrs. Duruth. It's a sure thing."

"Yes? I am glad of that," I said politely.

"You did not care for him to run?" he asked suddenly.

"I? Why, yes. Why shouldn't Max have been nominated? Do you know any good reason?"

The work lay in my lap now, and perhaps there sprang to my eyes that intense fear and apprehension with which each moment was weighted now. He watched me as he said:

"Not much! Max deserves all we can give him in that respect. You have a husband to be proud of. See here"—he broke off suddenly—"I don't like the way you look lately. As soon as the election is over Max must take you right away. I fancy you haven't had any too much of each other's society lately?"

I replied with some effort, and Dr. Jim made a jesting remark as he sprang up, but I felt that he saw the flame leap to my pale face and suspected the worm at the root of being. His call was followed by one from Max's mother, whose purpose was obvious.

"I hope you are doing all you possibly can to get well, Eve," she said. "A wife has much responsibility in sustaining her husband's political position, and there will be more entertaining for you to do soon, you know. Your illness has been a great tax upon him at this time."

I assented sadly, but too absorbed by the life-issue at stake to be resentful.

That night I put on a gown which had suited me, borrowing that which we know as the moral support of clothes, and went down to the dining-room for the first time, having ordered dinner somewhat earlier. This, I fancied, would aid me in evading the private interview with Max. The gown was pitifully large and the rings I slipped on were those of my

girlhood, and none which he had given me.

When he arrived, I was lying in a great chair, and strove to respond to his words of glad surprise, giving my cheek while he bent to kiss me. A shade of perplexity lay in his eyes, as he stood before the fire, looking upon me as he told me about his trip.

"I'm not in trim for dinner," he said, "but it is so good to have you downstairs that I don't want to miss a moment of it. There will be several men to see me after dinner, I fear. But all that will be over soon now."

I rang for dinner to be served, and forced myself to reply easily while striving to keep him interested impersonally, all the while knowing that my manner was artificial and that he watched me with growing perplexity, conscious of a change which could not be accounted for now by the extremest weakness. He could not fail to detect that I was determinedly bright and impersonal, not with the manner one yields to one's heart's dearest.

After dinner, Max said:

"Come up to the library before anyone calls, that I may see you for a while."

"Suppose we stay here," I ventured. "It has been quite an effort for me to come down."

He looked disappointed and the next hour was an effortful one, for having grown to consider my illness he did not ask me abruptly what it meant—that cool wave dividing us as clearly to my eyes as if it had been "the green ribbon that shone so fair." When his visitors were announced I bade him good night and went up to lock my door. Then I lay as exhausted as if the fight with self had been one of physical combat.

Fortunately, for the next twenty-four hours, Max's whole strength was required for the business at hand, and surrounded by the excitement attendant upon the election, he probably attributed my manner to the vagaries of convalescence. But whereas before my illness every step of the way would have been accompanied by

my vivid interest, he now returned to sit and read alone; for all the while I kept before my inner vision that fatal line: "Your devoted wife, Alice Duruth."

Back of the maimed pride, the torture of wounded love, the wild, stifled hope, there sprang to life the madness of jealousy.

Perhaps I am setting down that which another would modify, or call by a gentler name; but I believe all great issues to be wrought of the same human forces, that all great love embraces the same elements, the same pain or weakness, in greater or lesser proportion, according to the capacity of the nature whose product it is, and I knew that my crucifixion was not only the consciousness of my husband's deception, but the knowledge of that other woman who had been his "devoted wife, Alice Duruth."

We may theorize and think us brave, but cowardice lies in our love, even as in it lies the root of such heroism as we possess. On the afternoon of the election—after which I had planned to confess to Max my discovery—I found myself suddenly cold with the cowardice, and weak with fear of loss. The suspense had worn upon me until I could not endure the ticking of the clock. In my heart, I knew that it was the cry of hope which refused to die, and of faith which denied the assertion of my own sight.

At four o'clock, while pacing the floor, I suddenly flew to the telephone; something told me that I should go mad without action. Trembling, I called up Dr. Jim.

"I must go out," I said. "I must see you at once, and am going to the office. Don't refuse me, for I shall do it anyhow."

"Good!" he called without hesitation. "Come on. I'm here for an hour."

To Johanna's amazement, I ordered the motor-car and made ready for the street.

"But madam was not in the cold yet!" she expostulated.

"Johanna, take care of the boy!" I said, and wrapped myself in furs.

Whirling to Dr. Jim's office, my heart beat wildly, although my own intention was unformulated and vague. I knew that one could not go to another and question him about one's own husband, but Max had said once that Dr. Jim knew more about him than any man on earth did, and he might know if she were dead, this Alice Duruth. Mine was more the action of a harassed creature who flies to the strength of another in the face of that which it cannot meet alone.

"It was evidently a case of kill or cure," said the doctor, as he drew a chair to the fire for me. "I suppose Johanna is ready to see my finish. But you needed company on this strenuous day, didn't you?"

I nodded, fearing yet to trust words.

"Max will win in about half an hour," he went on easily.

"You have known Max a long time," I said.

"Since we were boys. We've breasted many a wave together. I confess that I was more than a little jealous of you, Mrs. Duruth!"

How could I go on? Yet I was madly determined to do so. My lips were dry as I said:

"Did you go West with him long ago?"

"West?" Dr. Jim shook his head.

"To Helmuth City," I murmured almost inaudibly.

"Oh, you mean about the Duruth case! No; but Max worked like a beaver over her—poor woman."

The oppression of fear was as a cold hand holding my heart still as I leaned forward.

"Who was she?" I asked faintly.

"A Miss Lee, I believe, before she married Max Duruth. Nice little thing, too."

"Max Duruth!" I was striving through a thick cloud which enveloped me.

"Max, Junior, we called him. He was one cousin, however, who was no ornament to the name, but our Max

stuck by him like a brick until he died—poor chap! Hello!"

I had struggled to my feet, a black mist before me, and I grasped the doctor's arm; but he put me back and ran for a phial and glass.

"Here! Take this! By Jove!" he exclaimed. But with the tide of realization my brain cleared and my heart commenced to beat. I got to my feet again.

"The car! Quick!" I gasped. "I must go to Max at once!"

Just what my face, in its rush of color and its conflict of emotion, told I did not care, but made for the door. Perhaps the doctor thought me a bit distraught, or perhaps some occult divination caused a glimmering of the truth, for he stifled an ejaculation and got me to the sidewalk in a trice. I, who had not taken a rapid step in months, fairly sprang into the motor-car.

"Home!" I called; and to the doctor, "I'll be better now!"

I left him gazing after me, but if it were with a perception of the truth no one ever knew it from Dr. Jim.

Tears were rolling down my face, but a tide of strength, the strength of certainty, seemed flooding my heart. I had awakened from a nightmare, in which I had experienced the impossible.

It was winter twilight now, and I called to the chauffeur to stop at a florist's and bring me a bunch of American Beauties. When he had done so I held them to my face, longing to absorb their sweetness and loveliness to win back something of fairness for Max's sake. At the house I flew up the steps, but was met by the man with a note at the door.

"Mr. Duruth will not return for dinner, madam," he said.

I signaled to the chauffeur and read Max's curt note:

DEAR EVE: I shall stay at the club until the returns are in. So do not expect me to dinner.

M.

It was as keen as a sharp wind upon the warm glow of expectation. In a moment I was back in the car, directing to be driven to the club. Dismay, fear, grief, were overcoming me, and with a tumult of self-accusation I knew that I had brought it all upon myself. I had been so unresponsive, so unkind that Max had thought I did not care enough to have him home that night of all nights.

At the club door I sent the man in, and Max came hurrying out at once in alarm; but when he saw my face over the roses a look of such gladness and relief shone in his that I reached my hand to draw him in as he sprang beside me.

"Why, Eve! And roses, too! Isn't it too cold for you? Why did you come yourself, dear? You could have telephoned me."

"Oh, Max!" It was dark now and I clung to him, sobbing. "I could not stay away a minute longer. I love you so! I love you, Max!"

"Home, quick!" he called to the chauffeur as the roses fell between us.

And something that was not cowardice told me not to tell him; that to inflict upon one's dearest that pain which is wrought of our own vain weakness is only selfishness.

"Oh, Max, I've been so wicked! Forgive me! Only forgive me and don't ask me why!" I sobbed.

But his answer was not in words, and as we reached home he swept me out and up the steps in his arms and back into our house of love.

While somewhere outside a newsboy was calling:

"Maxwell Duruth wins by a large majority!"

"I WONDER if that blind beggar's sense of taste is very acute?"
"Not so much so as his sense of 'touch,' I'll wager."

A TEST

SHE SAID—The styles this year are really so much grander than last. So much variety is demanded, and the colors are so trying. I bought a gown the other day and wished I hadn't, and I bought another and wished I hadn't. I shall have to get three more hats before I go away for the summer, and besides, I do not know where we shall go; the summer question is so trying anyway, and one gets so tired of the same old things.

HE SAID—I love you.

SHE SAID—Yes, of course, I might go to a quiet place where there are a certain number of intellectual people, only I really like a little gaiety, too; but somehow there is no depth to it. I don't say this, however, because I despise it; only, sometimes I think my college education has spoiled me for better things. I often wonder if men really approve of a college education for women. I think perhaps it makes them broader and gives them a mental grasp.

HE SAID—I love you.

SHE SAID—Of course, it all depends upon the temperament. There are girls smart enough to get along without knowing anything, and I sometimes feel as if knowledge makes one timid, because, you know, that when we introduce too much ratiocination into our actions we never do anything really worth while. And, after all, it may be best to go on blindly and trust to fate, although for myself I like to be as intelligent as possible, even if I have to suffer for it.

HE SAID—I love you.

SHE SAID—But I don't know, after all, that it matters, if one only obeys one's impulses and just goes ahead and does as one pleases. I think this is simply grand when one can do it, and I must confess I just adore drifting along without any aim, although one may deteriorate dreadfully. But at least one is not hampered by a growing responsibility, and who can tell, after all, that we have anything to say about it? I suppose it's dreadful of me even to insinuate that I may be a fatalist, but then I'm not at all sure that I am—only there is a side to it that is certainly appealing.

HE SAID—I love you.

And she replied swiftly: No, you don't! For if you did, you would never have permitted me to talk so much.

TOM MASSON.



FAR-REACHING

"SCRICHI has a tremendous voice, hasn't he?"

"Rather; I read that at the close of his Metropolitan engagement he was to be heard in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington."

SPUMANTE

By Clinton Scollard

SHE had been quoting Dante
In her dulcet, dreamy way,
As we sat over our Spumante
In the little old café.

Was it the poet's measure,
Or her morning eyes on mine,
Or was it the throb of pleasure
In the bubbles of sparkling wine,

That seized me in sudden capture,
And bore me as birds that fly,
A thrall to the radiant rapture
Of a sun-bright southern sky?

Both of us swiftly lifted
From the new world city's toils,
Till it seemed that we drowsed and drifted
Where the tawny Arno coils.

O'er us a tasseled awning
Stirred at the breeze's will,
With tints like those when dawning
Tinges a Tuscan hill.

Olives, ilexes, laurels,
Roses—a crimson throng—
Birds with their lyric quarrels,
And the contadini's song;

These we knew as we glided—
Scent and sound and sight—
And never a cloud divided
From the knowledge of pure delight,

From the simple sense of being;
Of a spoken word no need,
For a smile meant—hearts agreeing,
And a look said—souls agreed!

Two moderns of Manhattan?
Nay, we were for a time
Two lovers in silk and satin
Of the olden Tuscan clime!

THE SMART SET

For the space of a singing stanza,
Of a rhyme's recurring beat,
We lived out our romanza,
Brief, and yet passing sweet.

Then, there across the table
She sat in her winsome way,
Around us the laughing babel
Of the little old café.

And—was it the poet Dante,
Or her morning eyes on mine,
Or was it the cool Spumante—
The charm of the sparkling wine?



WHY HE CAME OUT

"GEORGE," said his mother-in-law, "I saw you coming out of a bar-room yesterday."

"Yes," answered George, "I had to catch a train."



A BIGGER HAUL

TRAIN-ROBBER—Say, Bill, don't bother about blowin' open the express safe.

BILL—But there's twenty thousand in it!

"That's small potatoes. I've captured a Pullman porter."



A BREAKFAST DIALOGUE

MRS. TALKWORDS—Henry, you were talking in your sleep last night.

HENRY—Pardon me for interrupting you.

HIS SHIPMATE, MISS DANE

By W. Carey Wonderly

CARTERET, with hands down deep in his Norfolk pockets and the inevitable cigarette between his lips, swung down the promenade deck searching eagerly among his fellow passengers for a tall, slim girl in a tailored suit and deer-stalker's hat.

He found her seated in a chair, surrounded with steamer-rugs and a novel of D'Annunzio's in her lap. The book at once proclaimed her an American, and, while the sight of a young and unprotected girl reading "*La Gioconda*" on the deck of an ocean liner in broad daylight affected Carteret somewhat forcibly, he reflected that American birth, like charity, covers a multitude of sins and shortcomings.

As Carteret passed her the old desire to know this lone, strange girl came to him with a rush. He had seen her come aboard at New York, and during the two days they had spent together on the *Lorraine* she had exercised a strange fascination for him which, try as he would, he could not overcome.

"Who is she?" he had asked himself again and again.

Her name was Nora Dane; but that told him nothing. A name is the smallest part of a man, albeit he comes from the Middle West and affects a hyphen.

Carteret threw away his cigarette and with a frown gazed thoughtfully out across the water. Then he squared his boyish shoulders and, giving a tug to his Norfolk, started once more down the promenade deck.

"If only she would drop D'Annunzio," he reflected nervously, settling his cravat.

But nothing happened. She did not even raise her eyes from her book.

Some dozen paces from her the young man stopped and, leaning on the railing, reflected on the best possible means of attack.

"I'll go tell Evelyn Cavendish," he said at last. "She'll know what to do."

Once more Carteret passed Miss Dane, and as he did so she raised her large, gray eyes to his; but when he half-stopped and lifted his hat she gave him such a seething glance that he went his way shamefacedly and angry both with himself and the girl.

"You are a bally ass, Billy Carteret," he told himself, "and as for Nora Dane, she is an abominable coquette." But herein he was wrong—partly.

He found Evelyn Cavendish on the opposite side of the ship with her French poodle, Bibi, and the manuscript of an American comedy.

"Hello, Billy!" she said brightly as he came up. "What's new in London?"

"Nothing much. You possibly forget that I have been away from England almost as long as yourself," replied the man.

"With as much success?" she queried gaily.

Carteret shook his head morosely. "We're not all as lucky as you, Evelyn," he answered.

"My dear boy, as the delightful Americans say, I knocked 'em silly. I'm bringing back piles of dollars to spend in Bond street. And the jolliest play! If the author and I can come to terms I shall use it to open the new Belgrave Theatre."

"You always were the luckiest girl," he told her. "Evelyn, what is the most ludicrous thing that brain of yours can conjure up?" he added suddenly.

She smiled serenely. "Billy Carteret in love!" she returned promptly. "Here, Billy boy, sit down and tell me all about it." She ruthlessly pushed Bibi off the next chair and made room for Carteret at her side.

Over the young man's handsome face a deep, crimson flush had slowly spread. "You're such a bloomin' tease!" he muttered half-angrily.

"Billy Carteret blushing like a schoolboy! Oh, Billy, Billy, who is it that has cut me out?" she laughed joyously.

Carteret watched her closely. Evelyn Cavendish was what men call a magnificent woman, being possessed of a perfect figure, almost classical features, wonderful brown eyes and a quantity of golden hair. Furthermore she was thirty-six, had never given a second thought to any one thing in all her life, and was a most successful actress, having a theatre of her own in the West End of London.

Carteret produced his cigarette-case. "Her name is Nora Dane," he said, applying a match to the monogrammed luxury between his lips. "Nora Dane."

"Certainly she was not 'made in Germany' along with the mechanical dolls and painted Noah's Arks," returned Miss Cavendish, gazing enviously at his cigarette.

"She is an American," declared Carteret somewhat sharply.

"Ah!" Miss Cavendish sat up and straightened her hat.

"Who—what—where—is she?" she said. "An heiress with a doting papa, from Buffalo-Billville, Kansas, on the promenade deck surrounded by a court of adoring gilded youth?"

The young man flushed with annoyance. "Now you are laughing at me, Evelyn," he protested, "and that is not according to Hoyle, you know."

"Come, show her to me, Billy boy! Poor little child, to be caught after all

these years by a gauche schoolgirl from the States!"

Carteret was sullenly quiet. Evelyn Cavendish had a way of treating him at times that made all his manhood cry aloud for vengeance. He was a blond, good-looking chap, born of an old Warwick family, and forgotten by Dame Fortune when that good lady drove about dispensing this world's goods. His was a type to be found in Piccadilly or the Park in dozens any clear morning in spring. But he had brains if he but cared to use them, only, as Evelyn Cavendish used to say, he didn't like to take the time to find them, don't you know.

"Well, Billy, I wish you luck," cried the actress as they strolled down the deck.

She had known Carteret for ten years and had long ago decided to marry him at some future date, but at the same time she had not the slightest objection to his flirting with a pretty girl. She was not a kill-sport, she told herself.

"There she is!" exclaimed Carteret suddenly.

Evelyn turned sharply and took in Miss Dane at one glance. Tall, rather thin, hair brown, eyes gray, no color whatever, young—perhaps twenty-five. Good!

"Now what are you going to do?" demanded Carteret.

To be truthful, Miss Cavendish had not the faintest idea of what she was going to do. Then, just as they got directly in front of the girl, Evelyn gave Bibi a rousing pinch, the poodle yelped wildly, Miss Dane dropped D'Annunzio, Carteret picked it up, and Miss Cavendish apologized profusely. Then they all laughed at nothing in particular.

An hour later the three went down to luncheon together.

"Do you see that little man with the Van Dyke beard and fur cap? Who is he?"

They were taking their morning walk on the promenade deck and it was Miss Dane who asked the question.

"Queer looking beggar," answered

Carteret, turning to glance after the man. "I don't know who he is, but I'll find out for you."

"Oh, no, no," Nora Dane told him. "It is not at all necessary. I was wondering who he was; he seems all alone and not very anxious to make friends. One of those card-playing Jews just spoke to him and he turned away most abruptly."

"H'm, beastly cad, I fancy," muttered Carteret, stopping to light a cigarette.

During the morning Nora Dane let drop sundry remarks which the man, picking up bit by bit and stringing together, wove into a fanciful romance. Far from being an heiress, she was poor and alone, her parents having died during her babyhood. Furthermore, she had tried to make a living as an artist in New York, and, having miserably failed, was flying to the only refuge left her, a home with some of her mother's people in Yorkshire, whom she had never seen.

Carteret longed to comfort the girl. He determined to speak to Evelyn Cavendish about her at once.

"Is the wind too strong, Miss Dane?" he asked, as they started on their second trip down the long, clear deck.

"No, I love it," she replied. "There is Miss Cavendish with Bibi."

He looked in the direction the girl indicated. "Yes, she's talking with Captain Buchasse," he returned indifferently.

They walked on in perfect silence. The morning sunlight, falling on the girl's hair turned it to burnished copper. Carteret's eyes were full of the admiration he felt.

"I think Miss Cavendish so beautiful!" Miss Dane exclaimed after a while. "What eyes she has! I have seen her twice in New York."

"Yes, Miss Cavendish is a very fine woman," returned Carteret easily.

"You are great friends?" hazarded the girl.

"Yes. I have known Evelyn Cavendish for more years than either of us

cares to remember, I fancy. She is a splendid woman in every way. We are great pals."

Nora Dane was strangely silent.

"What a queer place this world is!" she said suddenly, with a sad little smile. "It is only a freak of chance that made you Billy Carteret, clubman, instead of Michael Donovan, day laborer or wharf rat. And let me tell you that if you were born Donovan, nothing—nothing in this wide, wide world could make you Billy Carteret. Your inheritance is such that there is no getting away from your environment. You are what you are, and that you will remain until the end of the story."

Her outburst was so bitter, so filled with hatred at the injustice of Fate, that Carteret started visibly. She saw him and smiled, a bitter, mocking curve of her perfect lips.

"Oh, of course, you do not understand," she told him, looking with dull, staring eyes out across the sunlit water. "How could you? What do people like Billy Carteret, clubman, know of the many ins and outs, more puzzling and confusing than any Chinese enigma, the many little turning asides? What do people like Carteret know of the struggles of his neighbor and brother Donovan?"

"You've been reading," he gasped, only imperfectly catching her meaning, "D'Annunzio, Tolstoy and Ibsen. Worse than Welsh rabbit for little girls, Miss Dane."

"Little girl!" She laughed recklessly. "I am twenty-seven."

"Surely America is kind to its daughters," Carteret returned quickly. "I would have wagered my pipe that you were just from school. And besides," he added, with a sly glance, "no one but very silly schoolgirls read the Redoubtable Three nowadays."

"Come, let us walk again!" she said, her face perfectly expressionless. In the bright, searching rays of the sun, she looked her age, Carteret reflected. Her skin, at all times colorless, was a deadly white, and her eyes, cold and unseeing, stared directly before her.

She was indeed a caricature of the Nora Dane who had stepped aboard the *Lorraine* at New York.

"Nora," Carteret put out his hand and touched her arm. "Tell me."

"Tell you?" She turned her face until her eyes met his. Over her pallid features crept a warmth that made the young Englishman's heart glad. "Tell you what?—that Miss Cavendish is bearing down upon us with poor Bibi in disgrace? Bibi, *ma chérie*, come to Nora. Who has been scolding you, doggie?"

"Oh, take her." Evelyn threw the ugly little beast into the girl's outstretched arms. "She insisted on sitting on that horrid Mrs. Muggins's feet, and she, poor old thing, having on a four boot, squealed outrageously. As a *coup de grâce*, in my endeavors to get the brute I came down with all my weight on the already mutilated members. Now I am calmly awaiting a damage suit which will rob me of my hard-earned dollars. So I shall hie me away to my cabin, and if any limping female appears on the horizon, Bibi belongs to you. Possession is nine points of the law, Miss Dane."

Nora Dane looked after the retreating form of the actress, an ugly frown gathering like a coming storm. "What does she know of the Donovans of this world?" she demanded savagely, turning to the man at her side.

Carteret shook his head helplessly.

It was the same Mrs. Muggins of the small boots and the large feet who arranged a vaudeville to be given in the salon for the benefit of charity.

Evelyn Cavendish, no doubt remembering Bibi and the damage suit, graciously consented to "recite a little poem, jus' anything, you know, my dear."

The *Lorraine's* passenger list was full. It was the spring of the year, and the patriotic American, after slaving outrageously all winter, was rushing off to Europe to spend his dollars. That the vaudeville would prove a success was a foregone conclusion. Certainly Evelyn Caven-

dish never looked better in her life. Exquisitely gowned in a Paquin model, her magnificent hair dressed low on her head and a single string of diamonds clustering around her white, perfect neck, she was easily the handsomest woman aboard ship. Carteret watched her in languid admiration, and even the poker-players forgot their chips as she swept up the salon.

"I flatter myself that I look the counterpart of a real dowager duchess," she told Miss Dane and Carteret. "Fair, fat and forty, *pour passer le temps*, eh? This"—touching lightly the necklace—"is my reward for playing a long year in the wild and woolly West. There, do be quiet; the little heiress from Dakota is about to recite 'Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight,' for which, good Lord, let us be thankful! Do you like ices, Billy Carteret?"

As they made their escape down the staircase Nora Dane, glancing back over her shoulder, saw the figure of the man in the fur cap watching them narrowly.

The next morning Evelyn Cavendish met the pair on the promenade deck just as they had finished their first round. Carteret saw at once that something was wrong. Her eyes were dark and troubled, and her skin, blanched to an unearthly pallor, contrasted strangely with the black of her gown.

"Good morning," called Miss Dane brightly, while the actress was yet some yards away.

"What is it, Evelyn?" Carteret demanded as she came tottering up to them.

"My diamonds—my necklace," she gasped, catching the railing for support. "They are gone—stolen!"

While Nora Dane did all in her power to quiet her overtaxed nerves, Carteret went after Captain Buchasse, and Evelyn, sinking back in her chair, told the girl of the loss of her diamonds.

"As soon as I opened my eyes this morning, I knew something was wrong," Miss Cavendish began. "Clothes of every description were scattered all

over the room. Boxes and trunks had been ransacked and everything turned upon the floor—hats, gowns, lingerie, everything piled together in one mad mêlée. Then I knew my diamonds were gone!"

Two tears rolled down Evelyn's cheeks and Nora patted her hand and whispered words of consolation.

"Of course you will get them back," she told the actress. "Somebody on this boat has them and they cannot get away—that is impossible. I am willing to wager anything that you will have your necklace again before we anchor in the Mersey."

"I've been slaving like a dog in a country I despise," wept Miss Cavendish. "And now with one sweep of the hand half of my earnings are gone. Where is Billy Carteret? What is he doing?"

When the young Englishman came back with the captain, the four drew up their chairs and talked earnestly and long. Besides the ship's regular detective, there were two extra men—the liners always carried more in the busy season—and it seemed impossible for the thief to make his escape. Miss Cavendish saw these men in the captain's office, and all of the actress's friends were cautioned to keep silence on the subject. The other passengers must know nothing.

"You will get your jewels," a little man with a Van Dyke beard told her. Nora Dane and Carteret would have known this little individual as the man in the fur cap.

Billy Carteret stood on the deserted deck and looked moodily over the black waters. It was the night before the *Lorraine* was to enter the Mersey. His friendship with Nora Dane had not ripened into anything else, as he had hoped. In fact, their friendship seemed to be a decidedly one-sided affair. Miss Dane was responsible for this. One day she met him all smiles and gaiety, bubbling over with good fellowship, the next even Billy Carteret's winning manner could not win from her more than the barest responses. And the young

man, not understanding, was miserable withal.

"Mr. Carteret!" He looked around suddenly. In the blackness he could just make out Nora Dane's features.

"Nora!" he cried, putting out his hand.

"I have a confession to make," said the girl quietly.

"Me too!" All at once the clouds seemed lifted; at the end of a long vista he could see the radiant sun.

"Nora," he whispered, "I love you, little girl."

She shook her head emphatically. "No, oh, no!" she cried bitterly. "No, Mr. Carteret!"

"Yes. I have loved you, Nora, ever since the morning I saw you step aboard the *Lorraine* in New York. I did not even know your name then, I did not care to know it. I only knew I loved the girl with the great gray eyes and chestnut hair. Nora, Nora!"

For a moment a deep silence hung around them. Then Miss Dane, with an angry motion, as though shaking off something unclean, bade him follow her. Without a word Carteret followed her down to her cabin. Unfastening the door she motioned him to enter.

The room was in darkness. Putting up her hands she touched the electric button and directly the place was flooded in light.

"Nora—" Carteret made a step toward her, but she waved him back.

With set features, the girl crossed to a miniature safe that stood low on the floor beside the stationary dressing-table, and opening it took out a small chamois bag. Out of this bag she drew a chain of diamonds, and these she placed across Carteret's knee.

Instinctively their eyes met.

"I stole them," she said simply. "They belong to Evelyn Cavendish!"

"Nora!" The name was wrung from him unconsciously. At that moment the man's soul was laid bare to the girl.

She put up her hands as if to ward off a blow. "Don't, don't!" she cried piteously.

"Oh!" In his agony he threw the necklace, with a muttered oath, across the room. "Why did you do this thing?" he demanded, catching hold of her shoulder.

Nora Dane shook herself free with a bitter laugh. Calmly she went over and picked the burning, living string of fire from where it lay, half-under the berth.

"Put that down!" commanded Carteret.

Silently she obeyed.

"Now tell me why you took that thing!" His tone was sharp, decided, commanding; but his hand trembled visibly and his lips were deathlike.

The girl shrugged, while a bitter laugh escaped her. "I have told you why I did it," she said quite calmly. "I have not five dollars in the world and I am going to people whom I already hate, though I have never seen them. I am going to live on strangers' charity, because I cannot earn an honest living myself. It has been the dream of my life to study art in Paris—I know I would succeed if I had half a chance. With that"—she touched the necklace lightly—"all my dreams would be possible. After all, what does it matter? I am one of the world's Donovans!"

"Oh, Nora, how could you do it? And I loved you so!"

"That was your fault," she told him harshly. "You should be careful of making acquaintances on ocean liners. There, don't stand staring at me! Call in Captain Buchasse and Miss Cavendish and the detectives."

She looked so girlish, so pathetically young as she stood there in her agony, trying to brazen the thing out.

Carteret caught her hand. "Nora, little girl, I will return this thing to Miss Cavendish at once. She will ask no questions. Nora, I am ready to forget and forgive all, little girl."

She swung herself violently free. "You are a fool and I am a thief," she told him angrily. "Go! go! or I will call the detectives and give myself up!"

With the cursed ornament in his

hand, he moved slowly toward the door. On the threshold he turned and their eyes met.

"Nora!" he faltered.

"I want you to give me something—something to remember these happy days." She looked at him piteously, trembling like a leaf in a storm. "Just anything."

Carteret tugged at a heavy signet ring on his little finger.

"No, oh, no!" cried the girl, flushing crimson.

"Yes," he said masterfully. "It was my mother's and I want it to belong to the woman I love."

"But not to a thief! No, not to a common thief. You have a shilling—any English piece of money—give me that!"

Silently he handed her an English shilling.

"Thank you and good-bye!" She took hold of the door to close it after him.

"And you—you will give me something to remember? You can't deny me that!"

"It is better for us both that you should forget Nora Dane," she told him, closing the door.

Among the first passengers to leave the *Lorraine* after they were anchored in the Mersey was Nora Dane.

Evelyn Cavendish and Carteret were standing together on the promenade deck and saw her go. Neither made any sign. Miss Cavendish, with her necklace worn safely under her bodice, had asked no questions when Carteret brought her the diamonds, but she had thought much, being a shrewd and clever woman in her way.

On the *Lorraine* everything was chaos and noise. Evelyn turned to the young man at her side with a happy little laugh.

"New Bond street and Piccadilly once more, Billy boy!" she cried gaily.

"New Bond street and Piccadilly once more," he echoed dully. And together they went below to see to their luggage.

Nora Dane went at once to a quiet,

private hotel in Clarence street. In the coffee-room she was met by a tall, boyish man with blue eyes and a pleasant smile. He was an uncommonly good-looking chap.

"Rosie!"

"Tom!"

Instantly the man's whole countenance lighted up and bending toward her, he kissed her pale, bloodless lips tenderly.

"Are you well, sweetheart?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, Tom," she replied a trifle wearily.

Still with a happy smile he turned toward the staircase and silently Nora followed him up to a private sitting-room on the second floor.

"Well?" He looked at her, questioning her with his big blue eyes.

"I would like a cup of coffee, Tom," she told him.

With a little nod of perfect understanding the man ordered a pot of strong coffee.

Some minutes later she sat drinking it thirstily.

"Well, girlie?"

"I have it."

"Any trouble?"

"Not the slightest—mere child's play!"

"Waleski was aboard, you know, Rosie?"

"Oh, I know it." The girl laughed lightly at the recollection of the man in the fur cap. "He watched me like a hawk."

"Everything just as we planned?"

"Everything! I got the diamonds one night after a big blow-out. Kept them three days, then went to Evelyn Cavendish and confessed. She promised not to hand me over to the 'Pinks' provided I returned the necklace intact—I returned the paste duplicate we had made in the rue de la Paix!"

"Good girl!" The man nodded approvingly.

With a smile she reached up and unfastened her hat. Then with the

pocket-knife Tom gave her, she carefully ripped open the wild gull's breast that adorned it. The man watched her, an eager smile parting his well-cut lips.

"Do you know what this haul means, Rosie?" he asked her suddenly. "It means spending the whole, long summer down at Heronfield among our chickens and flowers. No more worry and hurry till all the money's gone, little girl."

"If we could only live like other people, Tom," sighed the girl. "I'm so tired of it all."

From out the gull's breast she drew a single string of diamonds, and passed them over to the man. With a little sigh of satisfaction he took them over to the light and scanned them with the practiced air of a connoisseur. Nora sat drumming on the table.

Suddenly Tom Leighton turned a haggard face to his companion, terror written on every feature.

"Great God, Rosie, what have you done? You have given Evelyn Cavendish back her diamonds and brought me these bits of paste!"

An hour later, a girl stood alone at the hotel window hopelessly watching the rain.

"I have tricked Tom. I have lied to Tom," she kept repeating over and over. "I have proved false to my trust—to my word. I have lied to the man who loves me—whom I love—love—whom you love, Rosie Blake!—whom you love!"

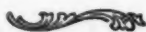
She put up her hand to relieve the choking sensation in her throat. Something hard and flat pressed against her flesh. She opened the bosom of her gown and drew it out—an English shilling tied on a piece of ribbon.

"He will never know," she faltered. "He will always believe—"

Directly a bitter little smile crossed her features.

"The Donovans of this weary world!" she repeated miserably.

"Oh, Billy, Billy Carteret!"



SOME ADVANTAGES OF POVERTY

IF you are reasonably poor you will benefit in the following way:

The chance is remote that you will be killed in an automobile accident—unless you are an unlucky pedestrian.

You will never be the defendant of a breach-of-promise suit.

You will never have to dodge the subpoena-server when the courts wish you to testify in proceedings against gamblers and life insurance officials.

Your wife will never plead with you thus: "Buy me some Russian sable carriage robes and a stomacher of diamonds and emeralds."

You will never hear people say of you, "I knew him when he didn't have a dollar to his name, and look at him now. He's not been in a street-car for two years."

No practical doctor will find that you are afflicted with appendicitis and other luxurious diseases.

You may be divorced without any unwelcome notoriety.

Your finances do not permit you to suffer the pangs of idleness and the drudgery of cruising in a yacht; nor do you have to tolerate the monotony of French chefs serving your food.

You will never be denounced from the pulpit by clergymen looking for space in the newspapers. It will never be said that you are "a lucky stock-jobber," "nerveless gambler," "a grinder of the poor," "an exterminator of competitors," "an uncharitable nabob," "a seeker for social position," "a heartless hypocrite."

Your own relatives will never say, "Your wife overdresses."

You will never be bothered by collectors for foreign missions, sanctimonious college presidents, ladies with "pet charities" and other genteel pursuers of your wealth.

RICHARD FECHHEIMER.



NOT BUILT THAT WAY

HARRIET—Some women wouldn't wear a low-neck gown.

AMY—There are more of them who shouldn't.



TESS—Gladys says she can think of ten good reasons for not allowing a man to kiss her.

JESS—Oh, so can I; but I can think of eleven why I might let him.

THE MIRACLE

By Bliss Carman

SPEAKING of art, and how we need
To give our lives up to succeed
Even a little; it is more
Than that, I fancy. Many pour
Their lives out freely and yet reach
No point they aim for. You may teach,
And they will learn quickly enough—
Take every hint, however gruff
Or casual, draw, study, toil
Like very diggers of the soil,
Yet never once achieve that touch
Which looks so little, means so much,
And comes but by the grace of God,
When all is said. Yes, it is odd,
How one may strive, yet miss the mark.

The incommunicable spark!
That is the only phrase that tells
The truth about the charm which dwells
In mastery, which is not bought,
Nor had by any taking thought;
A gift, inheritance, or dower,
A true possession, yet a power
To cultivate at will and use
Or not, as freely as we choose.
It matters not in having it,
Assured and adequate and fit,
Whether you're Rafael or Keats,
Beethoven with his music sheets,
Or the young lad who drew that thing
Behind the easel there.

What swing,
What quiet sorcery of line,
So sure, so final, and so fine,
To win and satisfy regard!
It is so easy—and so hard.
The voice, as true as when it came
To Moses from the bush of flame!
Sometimes the gift may lie unguessed
For years, until a spring is pressed,
And a door opens in the walls
Of being, and its Master calls.
That's genius. But how find the key
To that unworldly treasury;

THE SMART SET

How reach the room and light the fire
Which kindles not at our desire,
For all our effort? I know one
Instance, to show what may be done
By way of setting genius free
To prove its own divinity—
One way to startle and arouse
The sleeping angel that we house.

Love laughs at locksmiths, as we say.
You may be sure he knows the way
Into the garden of the heart
Where all the springs of greatness start—
Sorrow and pity and remorse
And many-colored joy. Of course
The story is not meant for those
Who spend a lifetime on the pose
Of living. Where the moral tends,
I leave our sanctimonious friends
To settle. You who paint and carve
And sing and dance and play—and starve
In art's great service every day
Will understand me when I say,
Knowledge and skill are not enough
Ever to take the place of love;
That hands and brains may strive and die
In their own dwarfed fatuity,
Unless they learn what love must know
And follow where it bids them go.
Unless the dauntless soul take part
In all their toil, there is no art,
No life, no wizardry, no power,
Only contrivance—like a flower
Of paper, every curve and hue,
Texture and hair, exact and true,
But lifeless. Did God ever lay
Color and shape upon the clay,
And not bestow the soul as well?
Is there an atom or a cell
Unvibrant in the universe?
Is beauty impotent or worse?
How came the substance and the plan
Into accord to make up man?

But, for my instance: On our floor
A German singing-master's door
Was next to mine, when studios
Could hardly smother ah's and oh's,
As they do now. Besides, in spring
We used to let our transoms swing,
And I could hear his pupils climb
Their scales up—two steps at a time,
Often. Disturb me? Not the least.
I think his temperature increased

Behind his spectacles of gold.
Unbent but grayish, somewhat old
And rather worn the man was now,
But still with the unvanquished brow
And smile which come from having wives,
Yet loving beauty all our lives.

Among his pupils there was one,
With pretty wavy hair like spun
Fine yellow gold, who came to sing—
A well-made, well-kept little thing,
With her tan gloves and long tan coat,
Soft tie and collar at her throat,
And music-roll in hand—the last,
I thought, to trifle or play fast
And loose with life—the very kind
To keep that poise and peace of mind
Where safety and contentment dwell.
It seems she had a heart as well.

She was his marvel and despair.
She had so confident an air,
Such clear, full, faultless certainty
Of power and ease, one wondered why
That ringing glorious voice of gold,
For all its splendor, left one cold;
And why she never had acquired
The shivering rapture he desired.
Talking of her, he used to say,
“Ah, vell, perhaps some day—some day!”

Now, *Enter Mephistopheles,*
Bringer of Knowledge, if you please.
There came to be a youth whose way
Would lead him every singing day
To stand across the street and wait
For her to join him. I thought Fate
Was much too good to him. Why blame?
When I was young, I did the same.
Though my post was a dark stage door.
(That must have been in Sixty-four!)
Well, as I say, Miss Puss would trip
Across the street to him, and slip
Her small, confiding, dainty hand
Down in his pocket, sometimes stand
Nestling it there a minute, lost
In plans, no doubt, before they crossed
The Avenue and disappeared.
They were my drama, and I feared
How it might end. I called it *Youth,*
Or, Dreams of Innocence and Truth.
No doubt they had another name
To call it by. It's all the same.
I loved them like my own.

THE SMART SET

One day

In April she arrived, all gay
And fresh as jonquils. One could tell
By tone and accent all was well
In her bright world, with golden spring
In town. Then she began to sing;
Softly at first; and then more strong,
Where the notes vibrate and prolong;
And then, as if she had forgot
All fear, and earth and time were not,
In one great lyric ecstasy
Daring and passionate and free,
Opening her throat against the tune,
Sang like a thrush in early June.

I never heard such rapture. All
Of love was in its dying fall,
The faith, the triumph, and the pride,
For which the world has lived and died
These countless years; the joyous fire,
Courage, magnificence, desire,
Pity, unfathomable grief,
And pain and sadness, and relief.
All this enchantment warm and wild,
Out of the heart of one mere child!

I put my brush aside and stopped
My painting, while the music dropped
Into the silence word by word,
As softly as a throbbing bird
Drops to the nest, contented now
Its joy was spent.

I wiped my brow,
And drew a breath. "At last!" I cried,
"At last she knows!" And then I tried
To paint—just one touch I must get,
Then stop; I lit a cigarette,
And failed again; then turned away,
And there was no more work that day.
Well, who could work upon the Feast
Of Vernal Joy? Not I, at least.

She always left at four o'clock.
Five minutes past I slipped my lock—
One more day done! And in the hall
Someone in passing had let fall
A piece of paper, which lay there
Between my doorway and the stair.
Thinking it might be someone's loss,
I picked it up. About to toss
It back as worthless, I espied
These verses on the underside:

"I am not lonely any more,
Since your dear presence blessed my door,
On that great night when sea and pine
Made all your moonlit beauty mine,
And your wild loving made of me
A wild woodland divinity."

And more. I did not read the rest,
But folded it again. I guessed
At once. And to reward me, there
She stood herself upon the stair.
I held it out just as she said,
"I dropped a note," then turned and fled,
Flinging a "Thank you" in her flight,
Blushing to death. I smiled outright,
Though I had been so grave before.
Dear little girl!

And then the door
Of the old teacher's studio
Clattered, and he came out to go
His cheerless, pensive way uptown.
I offered him, as we went down
The steps together, (he, so good
And fine in his old fortitude!)
Congratulations on the way
His favorite had sung that day.
He smiled his slow, sweet smile: "*Mein Gott*,
Dot vas a miracle, heh? Vhat?"
I told him I believed so too.

With reservations, so I do.



THE INEVITABLE

GRACE—Are Jack and Louise engaged?

NELL—No, but it's only a question of time before they will be married.
I heard them assuring each other that their friendship was purely platonic.



SUCCESSFUL

"WAS Mrs. Bluffum's dinner-dance a success?"

"Why, I should say so! It cost twice as much as they could afford, and
nearly all of the silver spoons were stolen."

THE QUARTER-HOUR BOOK BULLETIN

REVIEWS OF BOOKS RECEIVED FROM 2 TO 2.15 P.M., FRIDAY, FEBRUARY
32, 1919

MYRTIE. BY G. BURR MCCLUTCHEM. The story of a true young heart. Myrtila Monks, the heroine, feigns madness in order to be near her lover who has been made insane by hypodermic injections of a deadly fowl serum, and thinks himself a rooster. How the brave girl, disregarding sex, learns to crow in Morse in order to communicate with her lover, and overthrow the wily Dr. Clegg, will appeal to every devotee of unique fiction. (Issued by Publishers' Syndicate, \$7.50.)

BLANK-ITY-BLANK! BY SILAS LANDSEND CADY. This is not a pocket-encyclopedia of profanity, as its name might imply, but the title is the author's whimsical concession to the scarcity of titles unused. A historical novel, opening with a graphic description of the burning of Rome. Succeeding chapters hurl the spellbound reader from century to century, and leave him, awestruck and brain-fagged, on the continent of Atlantis, which is cleverly resurrected for the purpose. We are promised a sequel to this tremendous work, tomorrow. (Issued by Publishers' Syndicate, \$10.)

MY BOOK (Poetry). BY DICKON LA GOLDENPEN. A book for *the few!* Fifteen blank leaves of vellum bound in white kid and stamped with gold. The fly-leaf bears the publishers' guarantee that Mr. LaGoldenpen has stroked each leaf on both sides, seven times. Seven is a mystic number. Mr. LaGoldenpen has, hereby, imparted in great measure that subtle magnetism which has made him the chosen poet of the Esoteric Cult, and his worshipers will revel in this opportunity to absorb his true inwardness.

(Issued by Publishers' Syndicate, 7th Edition, \$40.)

THE STY. BY CLARENCE GOTEM-BEETON. A Nature Book, startling in its insight. Porcine intelligence, as revealed by Mr. Beeton, might well put us humans to shame. To obtain material for this book, Mr. Beeton occupied a sty adjoining several of these knowing creatures, and so became thoroughly permeated with his subject. His touching chapter on the piglet "Trikannie," will bring tears to the eyes of every lover of these animals.

(Issued by Publishers' Syndicate, \$10.)

BRIDGET. BY JAMES HENRY. Another of Mr. Henry's microscopic expositions of moods, motions, meditations (mostly)—what might have been, why it couldn't be, and the reason.

(We regret that we are unable to give the extended notice anything from Mr. Henry commands, but our first reader, Mr. Archibald, went suddenly insane at page 999, Vol. V. We assure our patrons that our 2.15 to 3 P.M. Bulletin will do justice to this trenchant bit.)

(Issued by Publishers' Syndicate, 7 vols., \$70 net.)

Other Books Received up to 2.20 P.M.: From authors outside the Trust, 125 volumes. While we endeavor to be strictly impartial, we cannot in justice to the readers of the Quarterly-Bulletin, give to any of these productions the encouragement of a Bulletin notice. See the 2.30 to 2.45 Bulletin!!! Extracts from the new books by the authors of "Stable Slang," "How Shurly Combes Came Back," etc., etc.

INEZ G. THOMPSON.

THE INTEREST

By Zona Gale

ST. REGIS stepped from the hansom before his friend and waited, his tall figure, in its long coat, towering above the passers on the Avenue. Trelny followed and paid for the cab, which St. Regis had picked up. Everyone did that way with St. Regis.

"Yes," St. Regis repeated, the angelic calm of his face belying his words, "I'm all in. I've got to get up an interest. Why the dickens can't I paint or strum? All these fellows seem to have studios with baths. And I've got to give up my little twopenny, ha'penny luxury just because I can't paint or strum."

Trelny smiled. He knew dozens of "those fellows" who painted and strummed with desperate earnestness, and who still had no studios. But St. Regis did not know, or, if he had known, he had forgotten. St. Regis forgot everything. He forgot that he had run away from an academy, thus ingloriously closing his school career, and so he continued to speak of his college days. He forgot just how far his travels had extended whenever he had been abroad, and so he talked of having been everywhere, and, hard-pressed, even remembered having climbed the Himalayas. From these and other ills of his own making the club members were eternally saving him, of whom Trelny was chief. Trelny was fond of him.

"No, I know it," he said once to his sister, when she chided him for their companionship, "St. Regis hasn't an idea why he was born. Really, I don't think it ever occurred to him that the matter needs justification. And still

there's something about good old St. Regis——"

Whatever the something was it never went unrecognized. All his lax methods were somehow forgiven for the sake of that something. Men and women fell victims to his great charm, and St. Regis might have married for money daily. That he did not was perhaps a symbol of what really was his charm.

The two men went up the steps of Trelny's aunt's house. Trelny, having found St. Regis unusually blue over luncheon, had recommended the visit.

"Aunt Agatha is just back from Bermuda," he said. "Would you care to drop in there for tea?"

"Ah, yes," said St. Regis, "Mrs. Latimer can suggest me an interest, if anyone can. And whatever she says I'll do—yes, by Jove, if she tells me to take to crewels."

Mrs. Latimer was having tea all alone. This somehow pleasantly surprised St. Regis. Tea always seemed a way to entertain guests—a delicate intimacy for the purpose of flattery, since of course no man drinks tea for tea's sake. But to find that the supposed ceremony was merely part of a routine—St. Regis liked it.

Mrs. Latimer had been married for ten years. Her hair was pushed from her face, and her eyebrows were always a little arched, as if in rather pleasant reflection. There were people to whom she could not talk, which is a tribute to pay to anyone; and she was one of the women who, in conversation, are never nervously delightful.

"Arthur," she said to Trelny, "how thoughtful of you to know that I am

back. Mr. St. Regis, you must have reminded him."

St. Regis smiled good-naturedly. He knew that he usually forgot.

"I didn't," he confessed. "The matter was too near my heart to talk about."

"They are getting you crumpets," she went on, dangling the tea-ball, "or will you have toast?"

"Oh, crumpets," returned St. Regis, "because I like to say them. Mrs. Latimer, I want a new and untried interest—something to occupy a mind, nimble but disused. I thought that you would know one; or Trelny thought so—didn't you, Trelny?" he appealed.

"That was my way of saying that I needed tea," observed Trelny in pleasant apostasy.

"But," said Mrs. Latimer rather wearily, "the most interesting thing possible is to want something very much. If you really want an interest very much, you are already interested. That is very stupid, isn't it?"

"Very," agreed St. Regis politely.

Mrs. Latimer shook her head. "Not half so stupid as what you said," she commented. "What you said was a very confession of stupidity. Forgive me."

"I know," returned St. Regis gloomily, "you want me to adopt some sensitive, orphaned child, or go down to the settlement and embroider ruffles. But I don't mean that. I want something that I'll like to do—that will make me feel that I am worth while. Now, if I could paint or strum," he went over it patiently, "those fellows seem to like that?"

He looked at Mrs. Latimer wistfully, as though he hoped to be contradicted.

The door opened and Angeline Dubaros came in. Mrs. Latimer had brought her back from Bermuda. She was the daughter of the hotel proprietor there, who had confided his ambitions for her voice to Mrs. Latimer. And she, who had no need to seek interests, had done what she could.

St. Regis and Trelny rose, and they were both astonished. Trelny was perhaps the more surprised of the two, for

he knew that his aunt had no protégées. She preferred to be constant to a few friends rather than ruler over many.

The girl was in outdoor, dress, and her cheeks were glowing. She bowed gravely, had sufficient concentration to catch both men's names, and removed her coat and hat. She came to the open fire with her hands white-gloved and uncovered them as she talked, putting back little, straying, dark locks. Her eyes were brilliant and restless, but there was delightful restraint in her manner. The contradiction piqued and allured.

"I wanted her to have her first drive in the Park alone," said Mrs. Latimer. "Some of my guests I do not waste that privilege upon, but I insist upon accompanying them. Angeline deserved to have it. What did you see, dear?"

"People—people!" cried the girl. "People frightfully cross, people laughing—there were more cross than sad ones, I fancy."

"And a tree or two?" suggested Mrs. Latimer.

"Ah, the green!" said the girl quickly. "One doesn't speak very much of that. But people—one may talk about them as one likes. They are not very sacred—those people in the Park, save the children."

Mrs. Latimer sighed. She herself was like a spirit, risen from the dead of the crudities and conditions of youth beside this young creature—buoyant, volatile, seeking for something.

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Latimer philosophically, "we must find room for people in the world as well as trees."

"Yes," assented the girl, "for us four and all the people whom we like."

She smiled about her impartially, tossed her gloves on the divan and appeared to forget the other three.

St. Regis watched her.

"And what shall we do then, Miss Dubaros?" he asked, "since I am admitted to this pleasant company."

She turned her direct look upon him. "What do you like to do?" she wanted to know.

"Ah," said St. Regis, "now we are

getting to the heart of the matter. Do you know, Miss Dubaros, that I came here today to tell Mrs. Latimer that I don't like to do anything—and I want to like something."

There was a moment's silence, but St. Regis was of those whose speeches may be followed by momentary silences without their sponsor trying nervously to correct their impression, either by a laugh or a modification.

"I want to like something very much indeed," he repeated.

"I wonder," thought Mrs. Latimer, "how I have patience with you, my friend? If you were anyone else you would be insufferable. Your triumph seems to consist flimsily of the fact that you *aren't* anyone else."

"Good old St. Regis!" thought Trelny compassionately.

Angeline was taking the matter quite seriously. She seemed to have the gift of seriousness, which is to the characteristic of seriousness as a bird of paradise to a sparrow.

"But that should be very easy," Angeline was saying. "There are people to make happy. Don't you love anyone?"

Mrs. Latimer looked hurriedly at her. She was glad of this opportunity to see this new friend in the clear light of her own men friends' presence. She was relieved to find that Angeline's eyes were meeting those of St. Regis without a shadow of coquetry. Indeed, one would as soon have accused a rose of coquetry.

"No," replied St. Regis, a little startled. "I'm very fond of people. I worship Mrs. Latimer. But I don't love anybody."

Angeline dismissed that at once.

"What do you know how to do?" she wanted practically to know.

It was St. Regis's turn to consider.

"I can coach pretty well," he said, "if the roads are such that the horses manage themselves. I can motor, if we don't break down. I can make a fair rabbit and bully coffee." St. Regis sat erect eagerly. "Bully coffee!" he repeated hopefully.

"I meant *work*," said Angeline, with

a certain dignified scorn. She was not sure that he was not jesting at her expense. "What work can you do?"

"I have often thought," said St. Regis eagerly, "that I might paint signs. I like the way the men hang their feet off and make the white bricks black in a jiffy. Do those fellows have studios—and baths?" he inquired of Trelny with a gleam of hope.

"Not now," interposed Mrs. Latimer, "but they'll be instituting them next. I know a clothier who has a 'studio' evening already. I believe that he started with an immense tray of pipes and has secured quite a following."

Angeline watched him with troubled eyes.

"How strange," she said, "not to have something that you like to get back to after you have rested. It must be very tedious. And you're not young enough to learn anything now," she continued thoughtfully.

Again Mrs. Latimer ventured to look at the girl's face. Mrs. Latimer had not the vulgarity to suspect all naïveté, but this surpassed everything; yet Angeline's expression reassured her.

St. Regis winced. "No," he assented, "no, I'm not young enough to learn anything now. The only thing, then, is to love someone. At all events, I'm not young enough—to have renounced that!"

Angeline smiled; she smiled as if she were obliged to and not as if she wished to convince anyone of her sense of humor.

"That will be best," she agreed, and turned away to Mrs. Latimer. "Ah," she cried, "I saw two in the Park whom I knew in Bermuda. They just missed seeing me, though I called their names. I oughtn't to have done that, ought I? Some people in a victoria looked so shocked—but I had my revenge, for nothing is so unbecoming as a shocked expression."

"That is why, Mr. St. Regis," said Mrs. Latimer hastily, "I do not assume one in your presence today."

She disliked her words, but poor St.

Regis had to be rescued from his state of calm abandonment by Angeline.

Angeline was all pretty attention when they said good-bye.

"Yes," she said to St. Regis, "I shall be here all the winter. It is quite too good to understand."

St. Regis said something else.

"I hope so too," said Angeline frankly.

St. Regis was silent as they walked down the Avenue, and Trelny's companionable silence was not assumed out of respect for the mood of his friend, but because he found himself going restlessly over what they had talked about at his aunt's, and trying to remember everything that Angeline Dubaros had said.

"Going to the Allises' tonight?" asked St. Regis as they passed beneath a preparatory-looking awning.

"No," said Trelny, and thought for a moment. "Well, yes, I may," he amended.

"Will Mrs. Latimer be there?" asked St. Regis carelessly.

Trelny cast him a sidelong glance. It was as if his own thought had been contagious.

"I fancy so," he said briefly.

St. Regis walked on, humming below his breath. His eyes were smiling.

"Rather a wonderful little creature, Miss Dubaros," he commented. "Don't you know who she is?"

"I haven't the least idea," disclaimed Trelny, almost curtly.

Presently St. Regis laughed out irritably.

"So I am not young enough to take up any work now!" he said grimly.

"What do you think of that?"

"I wasn't thinking of that," replied Trelny. He stopped at the corner of his own street. "I was thinking——"

"Yes?" said St. Regis, finding his matches.

"That you seem to have found an interest," said Trelny simply.

St. Regis's handsome face was ruddy in the glow that he had kindled.

"Well," he said, waving the match reflectively, "don't begrudge me that,

my dear fellow. I can't paint or strum."

Mrs. Latimer went to the Allises' that evening, and took Angeline. There were many who would not have risked it even though the girl in her white gown looked, as St. Regis affirmed, as if she had been christened at a coronation; but Mrs. Latimer believed in herself sufficiently to trust all those in whom she had elected to believe, and the evening justified her assumption. Mrs. Latimer's friends even paid her the compliment of not asking who Angeline was, and the girl's evening was made up of those pretty bubble triumphs which are the froth of social intercourse.

Whenever he was permitted St. Regis was by her side. There was one conversation in particular which he repeated to himself in the dark that night, feeling a certain shame.

"A woman is most beautiful in idleness," St. Regis had declared.

"No," Angeline had maintained, "a stupid woman is never really beautiful—not really. And an idle woman is usually stupid."

"Then an idle man," St. Regis had deduced gloomily, "is stupid, too."

Angeline, wishing to assent, yet evidently recalled their conversation of that afternoon.

"I did think so," she said slowly, "but you are not stupid, Mr. St. Regis."

She spoke very regretfully, disappointment at the exception to her rule evidently occupying her mind to the exclusion of St. Regis.

"If that were true, do you know why it is?" he had asked promptly. "It is because the world has changed for me—since this afternoon."

He was ashamed of the banality. And suddenly, in the clear look which she gave him, he was ashamed of his cheap daring and of himself.

"Ah," she said, "you have found an interest then? Have you? Can you tell me about it?"

St. Regis had fallen silent.

"Not now, I think," he said at last.

Briefly, St. Regis found in the days which followed, that his languid summary of womenkind so long adopted, so seldom contradicted by experience, was all wrong—since here was a woman who, in the height of her beauty and charm and with all her quick sympathy, moved above and beyond these others, transcending his little sphere of observation as easily as do the stars. Trelny, who would have no makeshifts in love or in friendship, had long fixed his eyes wistfully upon the orbit, too often vacant, in which Angeline moved. It hurt him now to see her trust in St. Regis—"good old St. Regis," for whom he vouched. Trelny dreaded the approach of the faintest look of sophistication in her clear eyes. The woman who is accustomed to everyone's moods and who accepts them with real, or assumed, ease was Trelny's abomination. Angeline maintained her individuality, was sympathetic without pliancy.

Trelny feared the easy air which St. Regis—"good old St. Regis"—had of classifying everything, and yoking and harnessing reticencies which should be treated as butterflies. He could not bear that the day should ever come when Angeline would speak lightly of anything that she now either revered or despised.

As for St. Regis, he, as usual, did not think at all. He only knew that the hours he spent with Angeline were the only part of the days that counted. He went nowhere that she was not expected. He dropped in at Mrs. Latimer's by profession, and was patient and devoted when she received him alone. Angeline allured and bewildered him because he could not believe that she was giving him more than her casual self. He longed patiently for just one word or look of his to be reflected as he gave it, and not forever to pass through the clear crystal of her look and be given back to him as it had been received. It was a hackneyed pastime, but it seemed new to St. Regis because the woman so transcended his paltry experience.

There came an afternoon when he thought that he had succeeded. Trelny and he were at Mrs. Latimer's. Trelny had lost his address-book and Mrs. Latimer, who declared that her mind was a switchboard, was telling him numbers by the score, while Angeline made the tea. St. Regis was patiently burning his hand to a crisp, making bad toast over the coals. Suddenly he looked up at Angeline.

"I didn't know that I was a domestic," he said, "but I am."

"You mustn't brag, Mr. St. Regis," she reproved him prettily. "That is equivalent to saying that you have nothing less than genius."

"I have," declared St. Regis openly. "I can think of nothing more wonderful than to be making breakfast like this—with you doing the tea."

She answered his look a little wonderingly, and suddenly her face was crimson. St. Regis had waited long for such a moment, and he was eagerly silent. Angeline buttered the toast reflectively, and gave him the plate for the hob.

"No," she said with perfect gravity, "I wouldn't want to be poor."

St. Regis walked home feeling, with amusement, as if he were a tentatively rejected suitor. And yet—he dared not hope, and still he could have sworn that she had given him her hand and said good-bye that day—differently.

He went to a musical that evening in a fever of impatience to know how she would greet him. But Mrs. Latimer appeared alone. He made his way at once to her side with his question.

"It is her music," said Mrs. Latimer, "that is keeping her. Angeline came to me yesterday and told me that she must give up all my poor frivolities. Her music is absorbing her. It will break her father's heart if she fails, and she knows it. He wanted to be an orchestra-leader himself, I believe, but his health broke down and he took to hotels instead. Angeline is all that he has. It would break his heart if she failed." Mrs. Latimer looked at

St. Regis for a moment. "We must not let her," she said gently.

"She is a very wonderful girl," said St. Regis slowly.

Mrs. Latimer turned to him swiftly. "Wonderful!" she flashed. "She is unlike any woman that you or I have ever known. She is what all good women dream of becoming—and seldom are. You, my friend, have never really spoken with her. And sometimes I feel that I have not."

St. Regis walked home in the crisp air two miles or more to his club. Mrs. Latimer's words had hurt him more than, at any other time, he would have cared to own. But tonight somehow their hurt faced him, and walked with him, and would not let him rest. "You, my friend, have never really spoken with her," she had said, and St. Regis knew that this was the truth. His self-love was very great. Any mode of life of which he had no understanding he was wont to dismiss as a mode which he did not elect to understand. But here was something, he saw with overwhelming surprise, which one could not approach with the smiling realization that one was not worthy, and continue approaching nevertheless. *He could not approach because he was not worthy.* It was like the law of an exact science. Really to have come into her presence and really to have spoken with her St. Regis saw that he must have begun to prepare twenty-thirty years before. For a moment he faced the gulf of all those years and turned, shuddering—St. Regis, "good old St. Regis," whose self-love was so great that he was seldom seriously concerned about anything, and who was wont complacently to confess that he had never been "blue."

St. Regis walked on slowly, going over the matter, remembering, looking forward. And the ease with which he made his decision surprised him, for it had been very long since he had decided anything. Usually everyone was kind, and Trelny helped him out, and there had appeared to be no positive need for taking sides. Things would work themselves out, he had

always vaguely considered. But now, having had forced upon him the truth of Mrs. Latimer's words, he found himself confronted by a certainty no less disturbing.

The fact that he was not of those who should come into Angeline's presence might not preclude her learning to love him.

St. Regis knew this. He knew that women of whom he was in no wise worthy had yet loved him; and he remembered the moment at tea that afternoon, and he remembered her good-bye that was—different. It was this, he saw suddenly, that he must prevent. St. Regis never knew how he came so clearly to understand what he must do; but he made his decision swiftly, easily, as a man may yield to wrong. Angeline must not learn to love him; for now he understood the gulf between them, and she would not know. "We must not let her fail," Mrs. Latimer had said, and it was her words that had suddenly shown St. Regis his true position—"good old St. Regis," who never in his life before had troubled to know what his position really was.

When he reached the club Trelny was miraculously alone in the reading-room. St. Regis appeared and stood before him. And the man's head was erect, and his bearing had assumed a certain appearance of dignity, supplanting his usual easy grace.

"Trelny," he said steadily, "I thought that maybe you would be relieved to know that I don't intend seeing—her—again."

Trelny met his eyes. There was no need to ask him whom he meant.

"Yes," said Trelny, "I am, St. Regis."

"But I haven't known why until tonight," said St. Regis, somewhat vaguely. He looked about the great, lonely room, and shivered. It had been weeks since he had spent an evening there, and the old listlessness of the days was everywhere, threatening.

"It's too bad," he burst out petulantly. "She was such a glorious

interest. Now here I am again—and still can't paint or strum!"

He wandered away down the room, and stood for a long time before a window. At intervals Trelny looked at him, and yearned over the big, useless creature as a father sorrows for a child who will not understand why it has been required to obey. At last Trelny went back to his book; and then suddenly St. Regis stood beside him, and in his eyes was a kind of victorious amazement.

"I've done something, haven't I?" St. Regis was saying uncertainly, "something that I didn't want to do, either. And yet it is worth while." Trelny smiled with a kind of fearful compassion at that "and yet." "And I've been," went on St. Regis, "looking all the while—for the thing that I wanted to do very much. But Trelny,"

his bewildered voice broke a little, "I wanted to *feel* the way that I do now!"

Trelny's heart gave a great bound. It was so intimate a thing, so terrible a thing to have St. Regis awake there, before him, and turn involuntarily to him as the friend who had always straightened out the tangles.

"*Trelny!*" cried St. Regis.

Trelny nodded; for no one can say anything to a man when that time comes.

St. Regis sat down before his friend. In the great chair his erect figure, with its late royal bearing, seemed strangely shrunken, and he looked at Trelny with dull eyes.

"An interest!" he said. "I've been talking about an interest. And all this time you have known that I didn't know!"



THOSE GIRLS

PAULINA—I believe it was rather a second-rate affair.

PERDITA—Perhaps it was only an oversight, your not getting an invitation.



NOTHING DOING

OLIVE—I wonder what Mr. Rocksey said to young Impecune when he wanted to marry his daughter?

VIOLET—Told him he didn't approve of his get-rich-quick scheme.



DYER—The only way to be happy is to make the best of everything.

RYER—No wonder our cook is unhappy!

WOMAN'S LOVE

LOVE was a nun all garbed in gray,
 Who walked alone, apart,
 With smileless lips that moved to pray,
 And meek hands on her heart.

Love was a king who chanced to pass
 On lightsome quest intent;
 He followed o'er the untrod grass
 The quiet way she went.

His warm eyes held her for an hour
 In that dear garden plot;
 The kiss, the token and the flower—
 Only the king forgot.

GRACE DUFFIELD GOODWIN.



ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY

COBWIGGER—Do you think a man should have plenty of money when he marries?

CADWELL—Certainly. Think how much a divorce costs!



THE SAFEST TIME

HE—When do you think I'd better speak to your father?
 SHE—After we're married.



LET us always remember our principles and forget our deviations from them.

A SPLENDID DECADENCE

By G. Vere Tyler

MANY a time she had asked herself how it would be with her, what the world would be like when she would enter a social gathering or public assemblage and not eclipse all the other women present. Not that she invariably did this, for she had the power of effacing herself, of taking down her flags, as it were, rolling up her sails and drifting about unobserved; but at will she did it. This enforced invisibility rested her highly colored existence and added zest to her impulses. She was like an actress who prefers a part that does not force her too frequently to the centre of the stage. She believed that life consisted in moments and for the better part preferred lassitude. She liked to keep away from things, sit apart and dream, her dreams being a kind of husbanding of forces. But even then she half-consciously posed and feasted upon the effects produced by her own loveliness. She had ceased to count the years that she had been doing this, creating out of herself exquisite pictures that she presented to public view and occasionally when, as I have explained, she so willed, lighting up these pictures from within with a rare illumination that caused her to shine among women like a star in a firmament of jewels.

Recently that question which she had asked herself as to how it would be when this theatric performance within herself would be impossible, had been more and more recurrent, so recurrent that a suggestion of fear had at times clutched at her heart. Why did it repeat itself so persistently in her brain? There must be a reason. She

had never answered the question, but her eyes followed other women whose beauty suggested a flash of her own starlight with a cruel gleam in their exquisite depths as if she would destroy them.

Apart from battling with the torturing question she was beginning to be much given to examining herself in her mirror under strong light, being courageous enough not to delude herself by false shades and deceptive tints. She would look long and hungrily into her eyes to be convinced of their clearness, at the corners of them that no actually visible lines were there; at her teeth that the enamel still shone; at her hair to be sure that the golden sheen was unmarred. She went to bed the day that, holding above her head a small hand-mirror in a dazzling sunlight, she had discovered several fine white tracings like the delicate threads that a spider weaves and extends from twig to twig. Her face was pallid as she plucked at the pretty, shadowy streaks in the dead gold and her hands trembled. Late in the afternoon, still feeling weak and tortured, she arose and walked out into the flower-garden that lay along the side of the house and close to the gate she discovered a bush of blooming roses. One full-blown one was so resplendent that she impulsively plucked it to pin upon her gown. But suddenly, as she lifted it to examine more minutely its superb splendor, she espied underneath two of its leaves in a half-shriveled state. Those two leaves and the cobweb threads in her head were emblematic—she and the rose were in the same stage of existence.

She threw it back into the bush and walked away rapidly to the house. For hours after she sat with a far-off, sad gaze in her eyes contemplating the ravages of time.

It seemed to her that just as horrible live creeping things attacked the poor dead body lying helpless in its coffin, invisible live creeping things were attacking her now—venomous, queer little artists they grew to appear to her, gloating over their horrible work. With all her dread of them her interest in them grew until to contemplate them fascinated her. How persistent and painstaking they were drawing with care day and night the little lines about her eyes, changing as with some magic fluid, the gold on her head to dull silver, creasing with infinite pains the knuckles of her long slender fingers that she had so adored for their perfection, flecking the dear pink nails, subtly clouding the rare coloring of her eyes, and the vivid carmine of her lips. And all this so delicately, deliberately, slowly and painlessly that she never knew when it was being done. What patient, perfect workmen, but what work! Not even a fiend could contemplate it without a shudder. She would draw her hands wearily across her eyes and lie down, a little tired, to try to forget, but the frightful cruelty of it and her own helplessness would lash her to renewed contemplation. And in spite of all this hers was a frank and courageous nature. Many things had come up in her life to be borne and she had borne them; she could face any calamity, any brave, strong enemy, but not a cowardly enemy stealing silently upon you unawares, taking advantage even of your tenderest sorrows to make headway or your innocent sleep to keep at work; an enemy that gave no warning of approach, an enemy so skilful, so endowed with perseverance and determination that no human being had ever been able to meet him in fair open fight or resist him. How many had tried! How she had tried! She smiled as she thought of her Turkish baths, her walks, her horse-

back rides, her numerous exercises of all descriptions and at the poor little weapons of defense that lay on her dressing-table: the boxes of powder, the phials of rouge, jars of cold cream of various makes, the balms, the electric rollers, the files, the polishers—all the little implements. How these things had accumulated with the years! She could remember a time when not one of them was there. How insignificant they seemed, yet in reality how terrible they were!

She turned her glance from them, shuddering. How useless they were by the side of Time's ignoble but faithful workmen! She strove to refresh herself by thoughts of her own courage and of magnificent forces that also did destructive work. She thought of the storms of the sea, the caving-in of the mountains, the roll and crash of thunder, the paintings of the heavens with sudden strokes of fire, the wind-storms destroying all before them, the cyclones suffocating and stifling, the arrival of insects that pitilessly defaced and destroyed—all these things, damaging as they often were, were after all grand if only in their awful power. But these invisible, silent destroyers, these creatures of insatiate appetites, oftentimes beginning on a woman before she had fairly escaped from childhood, commencing with almost invisible strokes, sometimes taking a whole year or years for one tiny damaging line, never hurrying, but always progressing, how was it possible to contemplate calmly this despicable enemy?—an enemy that progressed furtively, surreptitiously, stealthily, abominably, always with merciless, grotesque intent—that of caricaturing beauty. All old women of sixty were caricatures when compared with what they were at sixteen, and neither a holy life nor a bad life could save them. Sometimes it seemed to her that an old sinner's face was more agreeable than an old saint's face, for the work had been done in a bolder fashion and was more positive. At times these morbid thoughts changed to wild ones. What an insane prayer that had been to God to deny

her immortality by forgetting to prepare her for it! To be forgotten, simply to be left to go her way on earth forgotten, to be the one being—why not that miracle as well as others?—ignored by Time's insidious, energetic, repellent slaves! And that other terrible prayer—that her beloved might be robbed of his sight! Oh, to grow day by day into a caricature before the eyes that now loved to behold her and exulted so in her perfect loveliness! That was another tragedy, a tragedy even more awful than the one going on within her being. How was it possible to bear that? How had other women borne it? Her eyes would fill with tears while lingering on them, poor creatures, with the queer work progressing or almost finished. Funny objects they were that seeing them *actually* was enough to make one laugh or weep. Sometimes she did laugh as her eyes followed them waddling or tripping about in over-gay attire. Which one would she be like? Would the workmen blow her up as with bel-lows so that she, too, would waddle about, or would they dry her up until she was a little skeleton that the wind could topple over? Would they leave her her hair or her sight or her hearing or her teeth, or which would they rob her of? All partly, of course; but which entirely? Would they draw the queerest lines about her eyes or her mouth? Which feature would be absolutely destroyed? If only she could choose! Ah, how she would beg for her eyes. She remembered once passing a beautiful spring after some children had disturbed the clear waters. It had troubled her, for she delighted in the crystal water, so she sat and waited until all the beautiful clearness returned; but when the clearness of her eyes should be destroyed it would never return. She looked long, as though for the last time, into their wondrous depths that day.

II

THE July sun shone brightly on the glistening sand in front of the hotel and

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gaily into the many windows that looked out upon it.

At nine o'clock the woman who had become afraid of herself entered the crowded dining-room and took her seat at the table opposite the man who had preceded her and who was to watch her develop into a caricature. She was full of self-confidence this morning. Compliments had been showered upon her as she made her way to the dining-room and the fresh morning air had blown away her morbid thoughts. She felt safe, not of course for all time, but for the present—today—and she grasped at it a bit recklessly. She did not feel that she was flawless, but that the flaws were charmingly concealed. She felt her beauty permeating her and radiating, and her happiness made her more beautiful. Her eyes swept triumphantly over the heads of the women, and her lips were smiles until suddenly there appeared in the distance at the doorway what seemed to her to be an angel. The angel was clothed in pale blue, its slender waist encircled in gold, and had gold fastenings in its yellow hair. Her eyes never left the vision as it floated in and was seated a few feet away. A moment before triumphant, the woman was now spiritless. Glances traveled over her head to the angel in blue like the rays of the sun to a flower. So rare—and, in her eyes, unique—was the beauty they fell upon, so transcendently wondrous in all its fair proportions that the room about her, with its occupants, grew dark and faded away, while the angel stood out like a vision surrounded by clouds. She saw nothing else, and in her suddenly overwrought condition, with jealousy keener than teeth of fire biting into her flesh, confused visions of the girl floated before her. One moment it seemed to her that she was a glittering serpent that would spring upon her and strike; again, she was a disguised enemy sent by the devil to overthrow her, whom she had a right in any way to destroy. She half-rose in her seat, but fell back limp and helpless. She had forgotten to eat,

and when the man who was to watch her develop into a caricature called her attention to the fact, she looked at him dazed, like one recovering from a swoon. When she lifted her fork she realized that her appetite was gone, that her head ached and that her heart felt queer, like a lump of lead that someone had flung into her breast and which had lodged. All day she sat about in a half trance, and that night she dragged the man to a desolate part of the seashore, where it was entirely deserted, and to his amazement fell at his feet, sobbing. He lifted her and was startled at the look in her white face. She caught him by the arm, led him to a bench and seated him beside her.

"Harold," she whispered, "let's go away from here!"

"Go away?" he asked.

"Yes," she was still speaking under her breath, "to some far-off place in the country, in the very depths of the forest, where no one will ever come to disturb us—let's go away and hide!"

He laughed. "But why?"

"Because I want to, because it's the one thing in all the world I want to do! Oh, and it must be very far, where there is no civilization, nothing but you and me and the trees and streams and rocks—where there is just nature and no people—not one living soul but ourselves!"

He laughed again and stared at her. "*You!*" he exclaimed finally.

"Yes," she replied, "I—just you and I!"

"With no one but me to admire you?" he asked, and saw her tremble.

"With *no one* to admire me! I don't want even you to admire me. Oh, I'm tired of all that, dead to it—it's all over with me—that kind of thing!"

"For tonight, my love," he smiled.

"For always." She spoke aloud now and her voice was almost sepulchral.

"But why all this?" asked her husband indulgently. "What is all over with you?"

"Life in the world! You see, I've

had so much of it, I'm sick of it—I hate it!" She clung to him. "You don't know what it is to be a woman, a beautiful woman—it means so many things that you can't understand. Oh, Harold, take me away!"

"Until you get over this, certainly, my child, wherever you like. You're a little tired, the season has wearied you."

She faced him abruptly. "Did you think that girl who sat in front of us this morning at breakfast very beautiful?"

"Which girl?"

"You *know* which girl—don't lie, Harold—that isn't like you and it isn't necessary!"

"I *don't* know which girl; there were fifty girls in the dining-room!"

"And all pretty, I suppose?"

"They looked pretty, yes, in their get-ups—young girls do look pretty at the seashore, but any particular one I swear I don't recall."

"She wore blue," replied his wife feverishly; "she was very tall with light hair."

"Oh, yes, and had on a gold girdle!" answered Harold.

"You saw that?" She grew even paler.

"Certainly; noticed it when she came in; queer thing for the morning, I thought."

"And you thought her beautiful?"

"Not that exactly, but a pretty girl, yes!"

Her laugh startled him. "Pretty!" she exclaimed, "pretty! I just asked you to try you! Why, there wasn't the first thing pretty about her—not the first thing; she was hideous, I tell you, a painted and powdered doll with bleached hair, and so thin that her bones protruded! I suppose you didn't notice that!" She laughed that same laugh and louder.

For a moment Harold looked at her and then replied somewhat irritably: "No, I didn't notice; most young girls are thin—all I saw was a rather pretty girl in a blue dress and with a remarkable waist arrangement. But what of it—what's it to you or me whether

she's pretty or homely? The world's full of both kinds, made up and not made up. But what's the matter with you?" he continued, lifting her face tenderly in his hands. "You're as white as a sheet and you look startled—frightened to death. What has happened?"

She freed her face. "I am startled, I am frightened to death," she said.

"About what?"

"Nothing!" she laughed nervously. "I wish it was something, something that I could take hold of and destroy; but to be afraid of the intangible—the invisible things that are working your destruction and that make you wicked, that force vile thoughts into your brain! Ah! there are moments when I wish I had died five years ago—do you remember the time we were at Edgewood? That was five years ago!"

"When you used to wear that white crêpe dress with the green leaves embroidered upon it? I should rather think so! Oh, how beautiful you were!"

"Yes, I was, and that is the summer I should have died!"

"Nonsense," returned her husband; "don't say such foolish things!"

"But it is the truth! I never had any wicked thoughts then; I didn't know what it was to harbor a wicked thought. I was such a triumphant thing I thought only glorious thoughts. Ah, dearest, we never know what we are until we are confronted with disagreeable facts, until envy and jealousy and the ugly feelings knock at our heart. You don't know until then what a woman is capable of—the very best woman. You've always thought me a good woman, haven't you? Oh, not good, but generous and broad-minded, even charitable—I mean in my thoughts; of course, I never did things like the church women, but I've been—well, you've thought me a sweet woman, haven't you?"

"There never was anything sweeter on earth, my darling; your beauty charmed me, but your fine character holds me."

She flung back her head and the

moonlight flooded the lovely, tragic face. "And I tell you," she cried, "it's all a myth; I am nothing of the kind! There isn't a vile feeling that hasn't taken its seat in my brain in the last few days. I've been a liar, a murderer, and there has been nothing terrible that I did not feel myself capable of doing! That's why," she went on, "I say it's awful to be a woman, unless one has been born into the world ugly—that's different; only the ugly woman can be good all the way through, and only the ugly woman can escape suffering!"

"Don't talk nonsense, dear!" repeated Harold.

"It isn't nonsense, it's true! Every beautiful woman sooner or later has to undergo horrible suffering that men can't understand. Men who lose their fortunes suffer, and while they are trying to hold on sometimes become despicable; but think of a woman losing her beauty, think of her feeling herself day by day *robbed* until at last every vestige of it has gone. And think of her for years not being able to admit it, to have to lie and keep a bold front and act as though it still existed, and think of her loving someone and knowing that he knows it, but is keeping from her that he does know it!" She laughed again a little, childish, nervous laugh. "Let us be different, Harold; you be frank with me and I will be frank with you. Let's both watch my beauty as it goes and note every day what happens, and when we see funny marks made on my face or a tooth falls out, let's laugh about it, just as we do at funny pictures! The first time that I look at you through glasses let's laugh as though there never had been anything so funny before!"

She broke off and fell to sobbing again, her face buried against his arm. He stared down at her, overcome by astonishment. Suddenly she looked up at him. "You see I love you so!" she breathed.

"Of course you do, my sweetheart," he answered, and put the arm she had been leaning against about her.

"Do you know what I have wished,

dearest?" she asked, looking at him through her moist eyes. "That God would rob you of your sight before you realized that I wasn't as beautiful as you have always held me to be! I wished it this morning—yes, yes, I did—don't interrupt me; I wished it when that girl came into the dining-room and I saw you look at her. I felt that nothing else, nothing but your being absolutely blind would make the rest of my life endurable."

"My poor girl," said Harold, "you are ill—you talk as one raving in fever."

She clasped her hands nervously. "I am, I am raving in fever!"

"Come," said the man, rising; "go into the house. I'll put you to bed and get the doctor to come up."

"No, no, wait; it isn't that kind of fever, and I don't want to go in yet, not till they're all, everyone, gone to bed. I don't want to meet anyone. Oh, it's so sweet here, all by ourselves in the half-dark! I don't wish you to be blind—I did, I can't take it back, but I don't now, the thought is too terrible; but I wish the sun would fade away and only the moon be left to light the world. Don't you think that would be beautiful, dearest, a world lighted only by the moon?"

"No," Harold smiled, "I prefer a little sunlight, and so will you tomorrow when this spell has passed away. I'm going to tell Adele to begin packing in the morning; you need a change!"

When they finally rose to enter the hotel she bore heavily on his arm and walked unevenly, as though all strength had gone out of her.

III

THE next morning dawned bright and fair and she took her seat early on the broad piazza facing the ocean. The sky was blue and cloudless, the waves broke upon the shore with regular irregularity and the sea flashed its sparkle like the staccato notes of a waltz tune. Between her and the ocean the artificial grass and carefully

laid-out floral squares and circles almost glowed in the sunlight. The road for the vehicles was bright and yellow, the pedestrian path of crushed slate dark and somber, and beyond all this, like toy houses, the various cottages stood out gaily.

She was practically, on account of the early hour, alone, and her eyes wandered from one scene to another and finally closed on scenes of her own.

When she opened them groups of women were swarming the piazza, some taking their seats to chat or to open and read their letters, others aimlessly passing and repassing. Automobiles had been dashing about, up and down, across, and in every direction; and finally, as one scarlet one stopped before the door, her angel girl appeared in a cameo-tinted linen with a veil of the same shade tied about her fair face. More like a flower than ever she seemed, a pink blossom that left a delicate odor of some rare sachet on the air as she passed. Never had the woman felt anything so sweet cross her path. All the tenderness of youth seemed to linger in her wake, all the joy of the risen sun to envelop her as she was borne away in the scarlet machine, the woman's emotions of the past few days, recklessly expended the evening before, had left her tranquil. Remembering that the girl had attempted to smile at her in the dining-room and received no response, a tear sprang to her eye, and suddenly she loved this beautiful young girl as though she had been her own child grown into perfect womanhood. Her mind strayed far away from her surroundings to those of her childhood, and she remembered several old couples that had long before been attacked by time's workers, who were old and even feeble, but who still thought each other beautiful and who never even seemed to see the dazzling people about them at all. When she was the age of the young girl who passed she had stayed in the house with such an old couple, and the old man's eyes were often fixed in rap-

ture upon his wife, but never, that she could remember, once upon her. She had often wondered how he could look so admiringly into the faded, wrinkled old face, and now she knew it was a part of life's plan, one of the miracles, just as the blooming of flowers was a miracle.

All day she sat about, half-dreamily, charmed by the helplessness of human situations. Nothing any longer seemed to hurt her, neither the passing away of her beauty, which she knew to be sure, or the arrival of other women's beauty, which she knew to be sure. She smiled wistfully once. She had been wanting to rob the world of beautiful women, this world, that must roll on for ages, producing them just as it had produced her, long after she was gone. The sweetness of the day consoled her, the very blueness of the sky seemed to penetrate her and become a part of her, as did also the clear light that encircled her. The passing away and perishing and fading of all things seemed to charm her. She longed to see the day die and for the fall to come, that the leaves and flowers might wither before her eyes and fade into nothingness. There was rest in things thus perishing, things that had, like herself, been so violently alive. Would

she have wanted that self-splendor, that splendor that had dazzled her eyes and turned her head, to last forever, this beauty that had made of her in spirit a murderer? No, no; she wanted only to be sweet and patient and gentle while the slaves of time did their work. She closed her eyes and lay languidly back in her large rocker that they might go on undisturbed in their work of destruction. Finally, when she opened them, never had the earth and sea and sky seemed so beautiful. And it would always be thus, probably centuries from now it would be thus. The thought consoled her. The red automobile returned and the angel girl entered with a pink flush in her cheeks. Their eyes met and this time both smiled. This comforted her—the fact that she had smiled into those beautiful young eyes. Her gaze followed the girl lingeringly until she was out of sight. That would always be, too; beautiful girls would always exist. In nature's eyes she had been but one gorgeous rose like the one she threw into the bush.

Presently a little drawn look came about the lovely mouth. She knew why she was so quiet—she had surrendered.



SECURE

LARKIN—I'm on the right side of the market at last.
GILROY—Bull or bear side?
"Outside."



"AREN'T the Honeymoons very much married?"
"Yes, they are one and insufferable."

THE DROWNED

IN the middle night when the wind was still,
The drowned man came from the sea.
Like white mist blown to the window-sill,
All voiceless he spake to me.

"Oh, rise from your slumbers, you child of flesh,
And hear of the drowned and dead
Who circle here in the wet mist's mesh—
Now listen and heed," he said.

"Oh, I cry to you out of the clinging mist
Faint, faint as a spent wave's sigh.
Rose-red and warm were the lips I kissed
Where alien beaches lie.

"But better than these did I love the sea,
And I followed where she led,
And loved her the while she strangled me—
One of her million dead.

"And little I reck of the one I left,
Since a greater love than she
Fondles me close of her tender theft
Where her drowned, dead lovers be;

"Far, far is the grave where my earth-love lies,
Far, far is my own country—
Oh, scattered like foam these human ties,
For thrall am I to the sea.

"Oh, the arms of the sea are fair and strong
To pluck a man from his own,
And sweeter far is the sea's hushed song
Than sounds at a lad's hearthstone.

"If you love her not, oh, follow her not,
Flee fast from her salt, sweet breath—
Never forsaken she or forgot,
This wild, sweet sister of Death.

"Let the calm earth women give ye rest,
Nor turn toward the white-winged ships,
Thirsting the joy of the sea's deep breast,
Her cruel, exquisite lips."

THEODOSIA GARRISON AND KATE JORDAN.

L'ENCAISSEUR

Par Maurice Level

RAVENOT, encaisseur depuis dix ans dans la même banque, était un employé modèle. Jamais on n'avait eu la moindre observation à lui adresser, jamais on n'avait relevé la plus petite erreur dans ses comptes.

Vivant seul, évitant avec soin les relations nouvelles, n'allant pas au café, n'ayant pas de maîtresse, il semblait heureux, sans désirs. Si parfois quelqu'un disait devant lui :

— Ce doit être tentant de manier de si grosses sommes !

Il répondait simplement :

— Pourquoi ? L'argent qui ne vous appartient pas n'est pas de l'argent.

Il était l'homme intègre de son quartier, l'arbitre de toutes les questions délicates.

Or, un soir d'échéances, il ne rentra pas chez lui. L'idée d'un acte délicieux de sa part n'effleura même pas ceux qui le connaissaient. L'hypothèse d'un crime était seule possible. La police vérifia sa tournée. Il avait ponctuellement présenté ses billets, encaissé sa dernière valeur près de la porte de Montrouge, vers sept heures. Sa recette se montait alors à plus de deux cent mille francs. Depuis, on perdait sa trace. On fit des rafles, des battues dans les terrains vagues qui bordent les fortifications. On fouilla les cahutes sordides qui, de loin en loin, se dressent dans la zone militaire. Rien. Par acquit de conscience, on télégraphia dans toutes les directions, dans toutes les gares-frontières. Mais pour les directeurs de la banque aussi bien que pour la Sûreté, il était hors de doute que des rôdeurs l'avaient suivi, dévalisé et jeté à l'eau. D'après certains indices

même, on crut pouvoir affirmer que le coup était préparé de longue date par des professionnels du crime.

Un seul homme dans Paris haussait les épaules en lisant cela dans les journaux : cet homme, c'était Ravenot.

A l'heure où les plus fins limiers de la préfecture perdaient sa piste, il avait rejoint la Seine par les boulevards extérieurs. Sous l'arche d'un pont, il avait pris des vêtements bourgeois déposés par lui en cet endroit depuis la veille, mis dans ses poches les deux cent mille francs encaissés, fait de son uniforme et de sa sacoche un ballot lesté d'une énorme pierre, jeté le tout dans le fleuve, et, tranquillement, était rentré dans Paris. Il coucha dans un hôtel et dormit d'un sommeil paisible. En quelques heures, il était devenu un voleur émérite.

Il aurait pu, profitant de son avance, prendre le train et passer la frontière. Mais il était trop avisé pour croire que quelques centaines de kilomètres vous mettent à l'abri des gendarmes, et ne se faisait pas d'illusion sur le sort qui l'attendait. Il serait pris, il n'y avait aucun doute à cet égard. Aussi bien, son raisonnement était-il tout autre.

Le jour venu, il glissa les deux cent mille francs dans une large enveloppe qu'il scella de cinq cachets, et se rendit chez un notaire.

— Monsieur, dit-il, voici ce dont il s'agit. J'ai dans cette enveloppe des valeurs, des papiers que je désire mettre en sûreté. Je pars pour un lointain voyage et ne sais quand je reviendrai. Je vais vous confier ce pli. Rien ne s'oppose, je pense, à ce que j'effectue ce dépôt entre vos mains ?

— Rien. Je vous établis un reçu... Il acquiesça, puis réfléchit. Un reçu? Où le mettre? A qui le confier? Si je le conserve sur moi, je perds tout le bénéfice de mon dépôt... Il hésita, n'ayant pas prévu cette complication, puis, d'un air très naturel:

— Mon Dieu, je suis seul au monde, sans parents, sans amis. Le voyage que j'entreprends est très... hasardeux. Mon reçu courrait le risque d'être perdu... détruit... Pour la régularité des choses—on ne sait ni qui vit, ni qui meurt—ne pourriez-vous conserver ce papier par devers vous, dans vos archives? Ainsi, lors de mon retour, il me suffirait de dire mon nom soit à vous, soit à votre successeur.

— C'est que...

— Notez sur le reçu qu'il ne peut être réclamé que sous cette forme. En somme, si risque il y a, je suis le seul à le courir.

— Soit! Veuillez me dire votre nom.

Il répondit sans hésiter:

— Duverger, Henri Duverger.

Quand il fut dans la rue, il poussa un soupir de soulagement. La première partie de son programme était achevée. On pouvait lui mettre la main au collet: le produit de son vol était hors d'atteinte.

Il avait froidement calculé: A l'expiration de ma peine, je délivre mon dépôt. Nul ne saurait m'en contester la propriété. Quatre ou cinq mauvaises années à passer, et me voilà riche. C'est moins bête que de trimer toute sa vie. J'irai vivre à la campagne. Pour tous, je serai M. Duverger. Je vieillirai tranquille, en brave homme, faisant le bien, sans remords.

Il attendit encore vingt-quatre heures pour être certain qu'on ne possédait pas les numéros des billets de banque, et, rassuré sur ce point, délibérément, la cigarette aux lèvres, il alla se constituer prisonnier.

Un autre, à sa place, eût imaginé quelque histoire. Il préféra dire la vérité, avouer son vol. A quoi bon perdre du temps? Mais à l'instruction, pas plus qu'aux assises, on ne put lui arracher un mot concernant l'usage qu'il avait fait des 200,000 francs. Il se borna à dire:

— Je ne sais plus. Je me suis endormi sur un banc... J'ai été dévalisé à mon tour.

Grâce à ses antécédents irréprochables, il ne fut condamné qu'à cinq ans de prison. Il accueillit l'arrêt sans sourciller. Il avait trente-cinq ans. A quarante, il serait libre et riche. Il considérait cela comme un petit sacrifice nécessaire.

A la maison centrale où il purgea sa peine, il fut le modèle des détenus, comme il avait été le modèle des employés. Il regardait passer les jours sans impatience ni émoi, soucieux seulement de sa santé... Enfin, le jour de sa libération arriva! On lui avait remis son petit pécule—une dizaine de francs—mais il voulut aller de suite chez le notaire. L'avait-il assez rêvée, cette heure! Dans sa tête, il voyait la scène telle qu'elle allait se passer:

Il arrivait. On le faisait entrer dans le grand bureau solennel. Le notaire le reconnaîtrait-il?

Il se regarda dans une glace. Vraiment, il était bien vieilli, ravagé... Non, certes, le notaire ne le reconnaîtrait pas. Ha! Ha! Ce ne serait que plus drôle!

— Vous désirez, monsieur?

— Je viens pour un dépôt effectué par moi entre vos mains il y a cinq ans.

— Quel dépôt?... A quel nom?

— Au nom de Monsieur...

Il s'arrêta brusquement et murmura:

— Ça, c'est un peu fort!... Je ne me souviens plus du nom que j'ai donné!

Il chercha, chercha... Rien! il s'assit sur un banc et, sentant l'énerverment le gagner, se dit à lui-même:

— Voyons... du calme!... Monsieur... Monsieur... Ça commençait par... quelle lettre?...

Pendant une heure, il tourna, retourna sa mémoire, essayant de trouver un point de repère, un indice... Peine perdue. Le nom dansait devant lui, autour de lui; il voyait ses lettres sauter, ses syllabes fuir... A chaque seconde, il avait la sensation de le tenir, de l'avoir sous les yeux, sur la langue... Non! D'abord, cela n'avait été qu'un agacement; puis, c'était devenu irri-

tant, lancinant... précis, douloureux presque physiquement!... Des bouffées de chaleur montaient de ses reins à sa nuque. Les muscles se crispaient; il ne pouvait plus demeurer en place. Des tics agitaient ses mains. Il mordait ses lèvres sèches. Il avait à la fois envie de pleurer et de battre. Mais, plus il forçait son attention, plus le nom semblait s'éloigner. Il frappa du pied, se leva et dit:

— A quoi bon chercher?... Je ne trouverai pas... Je n'ai qu'à ne pas y penser, il viendra tout seul!

Mais, on n'arrache pas ainsi de sa tête une idée obsédante. Il avait beau dévisager les passants, s'arrêter aux étalages, écouter les bruits de la rue, derrière ce qu'il écoutait sans entendre et ce qu'il regardait sans voir, une seule question persistait:

— Monsieur?... Monsieur?...

La nuit vint. Les trottoirs se firent déserts. Harassé de fatigue, il entra dans un hôtel, se fit donner une chambre et se jeta tout habillé sur son lit. Il cherchait toujours. A l'aube, brisé de fatigue, il s'endormit. Quand il s'éveilla, il faisait grand jour. Il s'étira longuement, satisfait, et, tout à coup, l'obsession, un instant envolée, lui revint:

— Monsieur?... Monsieur?...

Un sentiment nouveau s'ajoutait à son angoisse: la peur! La peur de ne plus trouver ce nom, jamais. Il se leva, sortit, marcha des heures, à l'aventure, rôdant autour de la maison du notaire. Pour la deuxième fois, la nuit tomba. Il enfouissait ses ongles dans son crâne, gémissant:

— C'est à devenir fou!

Une effrayante idée s'étalait devant lui. Il avait 200,000 francs en billets de banque, 200,000 francs — mal acquis, entendu, mais, à lui — et il ne pourrait pas les tenir en sa possession! Pour les prendre, il avait fait cinq ans de bagne, et ils lui échappaient! Il les

voyait, à portée de sa main, et un mot, un simple mot qui ne voulait pas venir, lui faisait perdre tout cela! Il se frappait la tête à grands coups, sentant sa raison chavirer, se heurtant aux becs de gaz, battant la rue comme une homme ivre, butant aux rebords des trottoirs. Ce n'était plus de l'obsession, de la douleur, c'était une frénésie de tout son être, de son cerveau et de sa chair! La certitude était en lui qu'il ne trouverait plus. Il lui semblait qu'une voix ricanait à ses oreilles, que les passants le montraient du doigt. Il se mit à courir, droit devant lui, bousculant les gens, n'évitant plus les voitures. Il aurait voulu que quelqu'un levât la main sur lui, afin de pouvoir frapper à son tour; qu'un cheval le roulât sur le sol, piétinât sa peau torturée...

— Monsieur?... Monsieur?...

Il vit, à ses pieds, la Seine glauque, la Seine flasque qui scintillait sous les étoiles. Il sanglota:

— Monsieur?... Oh! ce nom!... Ce nom!...

Il descendit les marches qui menaient à la rive et, à plat ventre, s'allongea vers le fleuve, pour y rafraîchir ses mains et son visage. Il haletait... et l'eau l'attira... prit ses yeux... ses oreilles... tout son corps... Il se sentit glisser, n'eut même pas un geste pour se cramponner à la berge... et tomba... Le froid le cingla. Il se débattit... tendit les bras... dressa la tête... disparut... revint à la surface, et, soudain, dans un effort désespéré, les yeux effrayants, la bouche tordue, il hurla:

— J'ai trouvé!... Au secours! Duverger! Du...

...Le quai était désert. L'eau clapotait aux piles du pont; l'écho de l'arche sombre redit le nom dans le silence... Le fleuve ondulait, paresseux; des lueurs y dansaient, blanches et rouges... Une vague un peu plus forte lécha la berge près des anneaux suivants... Tout se tut...



EMANCIPATED

ONCE, when the roses were redolent,
 When every zephyr that blew
 Over the woodland and meadow lent
 Hints of the daybreak and dew,
 Down in the garden we walked about,
 While the birds caroled above,
 Taking the theme that we talked about—
 Love!

Cupid was just in his element
 On that particular day;
 I could see perfectly well he meant
 Some of his antics to play;
 Love, when I dared to confess it, he
 Told every blossom and leaf,
 Making my prayer, of necessity,
 Brief.

So, in a moment of bravery,
 There, in that garden of bliss,
 Ended my season of slavery
 All in the space of a kiss.
 Wed her? I know it would gratify
 Any young, sensible man;
 Some day I hope to do that, if I
 Can.

FELIX CARMEN.



HOUSEHOLD HINTS

TO make biscuits light—drench with gasoline and ignite before serving.
 How to keep servants—chloroform them and lock in the cellar.
 Quickest way to get rid of peddlers—buy all they have.
 How to remove fruit stains from linen—use scissors.
 To keep rats out of the pantry—place all food in the cellar.
 To entertain women visitors—let them inspect all your private papers.
 To entertain men visitors—feed the brutes.
 To keep the children at home—lock up all their clothes.
 To keep hubby at home—hide his toupee.
 In order to prevent accidents in the kitchen—fill the kerosene-can with water.
 To stop leaks in pipes—send for the nearest plumber.
 To economize on coal—get a gas range.
 To test the freshness of eggs—drop them on some hard surface.
 To propitiate the janitor—it can't be done.

THE LAUREL OF GOSSIP

By Richard Le Gallienne and Irma Perry

GOSSIP is the social reward of personality. Whether it be playful or poison-fanged, it is a recognition, a tribute, one of the most gratifying forms of success. So long as one is gossiped about, it is immaterial what shape or color the gossip takes. The ugly kind is perhaps to be preferred, as having more vitality, more motive power of circulation. And, of course, gossip has nothing to do with truth, good or bad. That is why it is—gossip.

Gossip neither means that you are very great nor very beautiful, nor even very bad; all that it means is that you are very—interesting. You may be great and beautiful and bad all in one, yet never get gossiped about. Here is one of the mysteries of gossip—its choice of subject. Gossip is most capricious in this respect. The mere fact of being public or conspicuous will not necessarily expose you to its flattering selection. Time and again, we see conspicuous figures publicly stealing the horse without comment, whereas if some humble individual, such as you or I, were to take a private peep over the hedge—how the tongues would go a-wagging. Some people can commit the most painstaking violations of convention, be most conscientiously startling in all their ways, yet no one pays the least attention, whereas let little So-and-So, once in a virtuous winter, forsake the straight and narrow path, and the whole town is ringing with the news. The reason is that there is "something about" little So-and-So that makes people fond of discussing him. Wherever mutual acquaintances

are gathered together, you are sure to hear his name. His friends never forget to inquire about him from each other, and the latest news of him is always in demand. If one asks why, one can only fall back on that—something about him.

What is that "something about them" which seems to make some men and women—from their very cradles—gossip chosen? It is hard to say, but probably the secret lies in their possession of some magnetic vitality which gives their actions a significance beyond—precisely the same action of others. They seem, somehow, more real than others, they awake in us a dramatic expectancy, and all they do takes on a dramatic value. In fact, they are, in one way or another, personalities, and their experiences become socially symbolic. If these experiences fall short of what is expected of their personalities, it is the business of gossip to invent experiences more in keeping. And thus arises that personal legend—that legend of oneself!—a legend which is founded not on what we have actually been and done, but on the dramatic suggestiveness of our personalities—what we look as if we ought to have been and ought to have done.

The disparity between this legend and the actual truth about ourselves will, of course, affect us according to our temperaments. If nature has made us sensitive to calumny, the legend may well give us more pain than pleasure, and the laurel of gossip become a veritable crown of thorns; but those whom nature has mysteriously chosen for gossip are, as a rule,

protectively constituted, not only to withstand it, but to enjoy it. Such take an impersonal delight in the methods of the invisible artist so industriously engaged in building their legend, and his ingenious mendacities awake their admiration and curiosity rather than their anger. They are being so evidently used as so much artistic material in his hands that the right of private protest hardly seems to belong to them. They are already being used as writers of historical novels use historical figures for their fictions, adapting and distorting their characters and their actions according to their artistic necessities. After all, they are only being treated during their lives as such figures, say, as Napoleon and Byron and Lady Hamilton are treated after their deaths, material which the humblest writer is free to magnify or maltreat as he has a mind to. Gossip having chosen them for her own, they no longer belong merely to themselves, and henceforward the actual truth about them as known to themselves and their intimates is neither here nor there. The muse of gossip has taken them and their story in hand, and, if they are sensible, they will wear the laurel she has bestowed with becoming vanity. Think how dreary it would be—not to be gossiped about. And that happens to quite numbers of people, who lead soured and disappointed lives in consequence, and absurdly take it out on the more fortunate, by, of all things, gossiping about them—thus paradoxically adding to the very laurels they envy.

It is the thought of these depressed contributory people that need be the only discomfort in the wearing of this laurel, which they and the like of them have woven for our chosen brows. The processes of gossip, like the processes of many other beautiful products, hardly bear looking into. Gossip resembles fame, of which indeed it is a form, in the insignificance of the individual units which swell together into such a brilliant grand

total of glory. What a lovely thing to a king or a hero or an orator is the rapt adoring multitude, hanging, dog-like, upon their every look and word, so long as it remains one compact, impersonal mob of immortality—but stop to think of the constituent parts, the thousand littlenesses that, by mere accumulation, have resulted in this beaming bigness, and glory wears for a moment a distasteful and indeed ridiculous aspect. There is perhaps in all that vast multitude not one person whose praise is individually of value, but a thousand such nothings make the something we call—fame.

So with gossip. It is, indeed, distasteful to think how this beautiful laurel that rustles and whispers so bravely about our ears came to be, to think of the countless small and dirty hands that wove incessantly mean lie on lie, the repulsive maggot-like activity of the myriad infinitesimal lives, the social infusoria, that, although their very existence was invisible and inaudible to us, busied themselves with our magnetic names.

Happily we are seldom brought into conscious contact with the repulsive makers of gossip themselves. Their work, like that of many other noisome industries, is done in secret, and, as we eat *pâté de foie gras*, without our minds being haunted by the diseased geese from whom it came, so we enjoy the gossip about us without a thought of the similar animals that have produced it.

That art, we know, is the greatest which conceals itself, and the art of gossip goes even further—it conceals the artist. That he should be concealed is indeed a necessity of an art, which is not only distasteful in its processes, but apt even to be dangerous in its practice. It is not everyone that appreciates the masterpieces of this art in the proper spirit. Like many inartistic critics, some allow moral and personal considerations to deflect their judgment, and this most significant of social tributes, instead of gratifying them as it should do,

fills them with righteous indignation. Here the microscopic smallness of the artist is his salvation. On whom shall this indignation be vented? The victim, as he, of course, erroneously regards himself, looks around, but in vain. More than likely the artist he burns to castigate is at his elbow, but he is so small that he escapes notice, and so all that beautiful anger wastes its sweetness on the desert air, and disturbs no one but the angry one himself.

Yet there are occasions, one admits, when the artist seems to have gone a little too far, and when one cries out, "Oh, this is too much!" occasions when to gain his effects he seems to have passed the bounds of artistic privilege, by inventions so bewilderingly base that even a name inured to outrage may confess itself momentarily stung with the sense of human meanness. Yet even here, after the first shock is over, indignation subsides into astonishment and curiosity; astonishment at the impudent audacity of the thing, and curiosity as to what manner of people are these social criminals who thus make it their strange business to lie about others. How strange it must be to be so interested in other people, and people, as a rule, quite unaware of our existence! Occasionally some indisputable member of this criminal class is pointed out to us—surely by no possible stretch of the imagination can we conceive ourselves caring to gossip about them! Their private lives may be the colors of the rainbow, they may be positively lurid with proven infamy, yet is it no concern of ours. They simply don't interest us. How strange, is it not, that we should so absorbingly interest them!

But who shall dictate to an artist his choice of material?—and it must never be lost sight of, however distasteful or eccentric his methods, that the gossip is first and last an artist, and, like all artists, seldom understood by the world at large. Only by keeping firm hold on this truth can we hope to gain any light on the psychology of

this strange being. It is for this reason that the stories he puts into circulation about his subjects are usually discreditable in their nature. He seldom has any good about them to tell. Seldom—one might say never—does he take us into a corner to tell us in mysterious confidence that So-and-So is devoted to his wife, or that So-and-So's private life is notorious—for its virtues. And why not? It is not that he means any harm—it would be a great injustice to suggest that—but that, as an artist, he has realized that bad stories are more effective than good. People simply won't listen to good about other people. It bores them. Somehow or other it fails to catch the eye. It is next to impossible to create an interesting scandal out of the virtues of one's subject. A good life lived in secret will remain a secret for all the efforts of well-meaning gossip to give it publicity. Deplore it or explain it as we will, black is more interesting than white, and humanity demands scandals of its great ones. Those who know the truth have told us again and again that the devil is not as black as he is painted, but no one believes them. No one wishes to believe them. In fact, nothing is more disillusioning to popular sentiment than the occasional discovery of the distressing goodness of famous naughty people. They were not so naughty after all, and interest in them immediately declines. What is the reason of this popular preference for naughtiness rather than saintliness in its heroes? Perhaps Hafiz put his finger on it, when, hurling defiance at the scandal-mongers of Shiraz, he wrote:

Talk to me not about the Book of Sin,
For, friend, to tell the truth,
That is the book I would be written in—
It is so full of youth.
And, mark me, friend, when on the Judgment Day
The black book and the white
Are angel-opened there in Allah's sight
For all to read what's writ—
Just watch how lonely the white book will
be!
But the black book, wherein is writ my
name—

My name, my shame, my fame—

With busy readers all besieged you'll see,
Yea! almost thumbed away,
So interesting it!

It is so full of youth! Yes! distressing as it may be to moralists, the world at large would seem to associate a saving virtue of romantic vitality with what it significantly speaks of as the "generous errors" of the lauded sinner, and, whatever its formal professions of faith, is at heart one with Aucassin, when he made his famous reply to those who threatened him with hell-fire if he persisted in his love for the Saracen Nicolette, she whose feet were so white that the daisies seemed black beside them.

"Paradise!" he laughs, "in paradise what have I to win? Therein I seek not to enter, but only to have Nicolette, my sweet lady that I love so well. For into paradise go none but such folk as I shall tell thee now: Thither go these same old priests, and halt old men and maimed, who all day and night cower continually before the altars and the crypts; and such folk as wear old amices and old clouted frocks, and naked folk and shoeless, and covered with sores, perishing of hunger and thirst, and of cold and of little ease. These be they that go into paradise; with them have I naught to make. But into hell would I fain go; for into hell fare the goodly clerks, and goodly knights that fall in tournaments and great wars, and stout men-at-arms, and all men noble. With these would I liefly go. And thither pass the sweet ladies and courteous that have two lovers, or three, and their lords also thereto. Thither go the gold, and the silver, and cloth of vair, and cloth of gris, and harpers, and makers, and the princes of this world. With these I would gladly go, let me but have with me Nicolette, my sweetest lady."

Strange that centuries of Christian piety have failed to make an interesting heaven, and it is to be feared that the saints who have most successfully touched the imaginations of humanity are those who, like Saint Augustine,

had first to their credit an entertaining record as sinners.

Humanity would seem particularly to demand such credentials of its artists, its poets, painters, musicians and actors. Even a popular preacher is none the worse off for a *soupçon* of whispered frivolity. The world will forgive its artists anything but propriety. Stupid people occasionally rise up mistakenly to whitewash the memories of the erring great. They write books to prove that Burns was a woman-hater, Poe a teetotaler, and Byron a much-mistaken family man. Fortunately for the poets in question, these iconoclastic efforts have been in vain, and the original legends remain in all their pristine satanic hues. The gaiety of nations is not to be mocked in this way. If such misguided enthusiasts would, instead, make for us a discovery of some new Highland Mary hitherto overlooked by Burns's biographers, or tell us all about the mysterious drug that inspired "The Raven," or prove beyond a disappointing doubt that the wicked English milord did really maintain a seraglio at Venice, *then* we should be all ears of gratitude. But to rob a poet of his bad name! that is indeed a dull and doubtful service.

No ambitious artist who knows his business fears gossip. Quite the contrary. What he does fear is that he may escape it, that it may pass him indifferently by. Here is a true story.

Once upon a time there was a certain great portrait-painter of whom *terrible* stories were told. He was a very picturesque, romantic-looking man, and his love affairs were said to be as the sands upon the seashore. Mysterious wickedness beyond the imagination of man was attributed to him. His hidden life—oh, well! don't let us speak of it. Respectable houses, one was told in a whisper, were hermetically sealed to him. Yet one noticed that one met him everywhere. Daughters were hidden away in cupboards at his approach, young men were warned against his influence, and really he was not to be spoken of. Yet everywhere, and all the time, no

one talked of anyone else; and every beautiful woman, whose husband was rich enough, had him to paint her portrait. Well, one night he and a friend were sitting together over their coffee in his studio, silently smoking their cigarettes. Suddenly the friend broke the silence.

"Forgive me," he said, "but there is a question I have long wished to ask you?"

"Go ahead," answered the painter.

"Well," continued the friend, "you seem to be always at work, or at parties. I want to know when on earth you find time to lead the awful life everyone speaks of."

The artist looked up with a scared expression, but he tried to smile.

"Don't say you have discovered my secret," he said nervously.

"Secret! I should hardly call it a secret, old man," replied his friend.

"Even you yourself must have heard something of the gossip."

"Oh, I see!" rejoined the artist, evidently relieved.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing!" And then, evidently changing his mind, the artist turned again to his friend. "Listen," he said.

"If I tell you a secret, which I feel rather inclined to confide, will you promise never, under any provocation, to divulge it?"

The friend promised.

"Well, then," the artist proceeded, "I am going to reveal to you a secret, the exposure of which would mean my utter ruin, a secret known only to three or four of my nearest friends, a secret on which my whole artistic success, and my very livelihood, depend——"

"It is safe with me," interpolated the friend.

"I believe so, though it is one you will find it hard to keep. It is this—I am an impostor——"

"An impostor!"

"Yes! the infamous rumors, the mysterious scandals, the terrible private life, all—all—an imposture, a cheat, a farce, a conspiracy——"

"I don't understand."

"Simply this. There is not one word

of truth in all the stories, and the whole fable is nothing more nor less than an advertising device hit upon a few years ago in a moment of despair, I might almost say of starvation——"

"Go on."

"Well, I had painted for years without recognition, painted far better than I paint nowadays. But it all went for nothing. Outside a few acquaintances, I remained unknown and unappreciated. Then one day a cynical friend of mine came to me and said: 'What you need is to get talked about.' 'No doubt,' I answered, 'but how is it to be done?' My friend thought a moment. 'I have a plan,' he said, 'if only you will let me carry it out.' 'Anything,' I answered, for I was desperate. 'Will you give me permission to lie about you?' asked my friend. 'Lie about me!' I asked in astonishment. 'Yes! lie broadcast—wonderful, lurid, picturesque lies, dissipation, affairs with women, drink, drugs, anything and everything. If you will, with your confounded romantic looks, I'll guarantee you fame and all the sitters you want within a year.'"

The artist paused.

"Well?" prompted his listener.

"As I say, I was desperate, ready for anything—so I consented, and——"

"And?"

"My friend kept his word. He got two or three friends to help him, and the little band lied about me like Trojans, sowing broadcast the most diabolical inventions, till, at last—well, the sitters came."

"Is that all?"

"Yes! that's all—only remember your promise, remember that the moment the truth is out, the moment the world suspects the milk-white innocence and dove-like domesticity of my actual life, the game is up and my day is done."

This is a true story; and so it is, thanks to those humble little unrequited servants of genius we call gossips, that the majority of laurels are woven and won.

POLLY'S DOOR

YOU may lull me with the whispering surf, asleep in halcyon calms,
 You may thrill me with the mocking-bird that lilts in Southern palms;
 But I have heard a note that stirred the tenderest chords far more—
 It is the catch that springs the latch and opens Polly's door.

Soul-grimed with battling hours of toil, in strife for bread for two,
 I faintly ring and hear within dear Polly's glad tattoo.
 Without are gloom and doubt and fear, within love's boundless store,
 Our lives begin—and end—within the pale of Polly's door.

So when I reach the golden gate and, with half-faltering eyes,
 Await entrée along the way that leads to paradise,
 Oh, may the sound that thrills my soul be sweet as that of yore
 I heard when Polly saw me come and opened wide the door!

WALTER DUNHAM MAKEPEACE.



ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT

"PA, what is a legend?"
 "A dignified lie, carrying a gold-headed cane and wearing a snow-white wig, my son."



THE MODERN BARD

"DO you think he has the necessary qualifications for a poet?"
 "Yes, an assured income."



THE PROBABLE SOURCE

"THE rumor that Boreby has been killed——"
 "Oh, it was probably started by some of his friends."

THE LONGEST DAY

A SYMPOSIUM

By Edward W. Barnard

THE LOVER:

WHEN in our courtship's course some chance would send
My best beloved miles away from me,
It seemed the day would never, never end—
A sort of small—and dull—eternity.
But those days that I thought were shod with lead,
Through which I fumed and fretted, swore and yawned,
It seems were short indeed. Tonight we wed—
Today's the longest day that ever dawned!

THE PAGAN:

A conscienceless, gay trifler, such as I,
Kills time without a pang when it would drag;
But one day in my year declines to fly
And is of years the very Broddingnag.
'Tis that midsummer Sunday I renew
Youth's friendships fond (alas! each year the search
Grows shorter!) then, with nothing else to do,
Go twice to church and yet again to church.

HONORA:

An' sure the days are ahl aloike to me!
Oi hov no toime to fale the cowl'd or hate.
Phwativer comes, it's jist the same. I be
From foive till tin upon me poor owld fate.
With Pat (who coaxed me from the Sligo lakes)
A-coortin' of that brazent Biddy Shea,
And not a loine from home this sivin wakes;
Fait', ivry day's the divil's longest day!

THE PROFESSOR:

You want to know the twelvemonth's longest day?
Where were you schooled, to ask what infants know?
Or is it some cheap catch to bring my gray
And honored head with sore vexation low?
'Tis not? Well, then, some days their courses run
By fickle stars or more inconstant moon;
Of those we measure by the steadfast sun
The longest day's the twenty-first of June!

THE SMART SET

THE BOY:

My boy insists that these good folks are wrong
 With all the arrogance nine years beget.
 School-days, he says, are all tremendous long,
 And rainy days and Sundays longer yet.
 But whereso the investigator goes—
 Equatorward or to the niveous North,
 Or to the East or Westward Ho!—he *knows*
 THE LONGEST DAY'S DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH!



INNOCENT

HE—Has she been married long?
 SHE—No; she still thinks that her husband eats cloves because he likes them.



VERY CONSOLING

MRS. BLACK—She thought she had a prize, and now she's divorced from him.
 MRS. WHITE—Well, alimony isn't such a bad consolation prize.



A SONG

SCENTED apples in the bin,
 Loaf, and bed, and candle,
 And a cloak to wrap me in,
 And a son to dandle;

Lands that run from sky to sky,
 Market-place and buying—
 What are these when Death comes by,
 Crying, crying, crying!

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE.



PITY may be akin to Love, but she's certainly a poor relation.

AN "EXTRA"

By Mabel Herbert Uner

ALL the passengers in the rear sleeper had been killed, but as yet few bodies were identified. Only two or three names were given. A rough cut of a shattered, burning car, with "Terrible Wreck" in huge billboard letters took up half the page.

She never forgot how that page looked; at any time in her after life she could have reproduced it, even to the blurred lines under the heavy black type. The paper was fresh from the press, and the odor of printer's ink was ever afterward associated with that hour.

The newsboys were crying the extras in the street below, and now and then came the sound of a distant hand-organ.

There were two other trains he might have taken—and this one. From the moment she had first glanced at the paper, she felt with a fearful certainty that it had been this one.

And now all the unkindness and coldness and intolerance that she had ever felt for him was burning itself into her brain.

Only yesterday, her birthday, he had brought her a great box of roses. Awkwardly and clumsily as was his way, he had given them to her, and she had laid them aside with perfunctory thanks and an impatient disdain of his awkwardness.

And then she thought of the letter she had written her younger sister a few days before—"Marry Jack Craig if you want to. He is clever, brilliant, fascinating—and, after all, those are the things that count. He may be a scoundrel, a drunkard, a rake—oh,

Madge, it doesn't much matter what he is—if only he isn't a fool! You can forgive a man you love everything but stupidity. That is the one hopeless, unpardonable thing. There is no wretchedness so great as that of a woman married to a man that she knows is a fool."

That she had not sent the letter gave her little comfort, for she had destroyed it through no sense of loyalty to him, but from the same instinct which prompts us to conceal our wounds.

The telephone bell in the hall rang out sharply. There was a little pause and then it rang again—a loud, impatient ring. But she did not move; she sat with clasped hands, her eyes staring vacantly toward the hall. They wanted to tell her of his death. She would not let them. She knew it already, she would not hear it put into words.

The bell rang again and yet again with angry persistency, and she listened with a curious sense of defiance. When at length it ceased she pictured them bringing him home to her—still and lifeless, and so piteously cold.

A sickening wave of remorse swept over her. Oh, that she might kneel beside him and kiss his hands—the hands at which in her heart she had so often sneered. What if they were large and thick and awkward—they were kindly, honest hands, and now, perhaps, they were burned and crushed beyond recognition. If she might only have a chance to atone, to make some restitution for all these years of coldness and indifference. And it had been worse than indifference, it had

been derision and disdain, so thinly veiled that she could not but know how often and how deeply she had wounded him.

How relentless had been her cruelty! She who could never bear that any creature-thing should suffer, whose heart went out to every friendless dog, to every poor old dray horse—yet, to this man, this kindly, simple man who loved her, she had been without pity.

She slipped down on her knees beside the chair. It was hardly a prayer—those half-formed, incoherent sentences that she murmured. It had been years since she had prayed; but now she was following the primitive instinct that is in us all—the seeking of some supreme power in the moment of greatest need.

A long time she knelt there, only vaguely conscious that the chair-arm was pressing painfully against her cheek, and that her nervous, trembling fingers were tearing the braid of the upholstery.

There was a loud closing of a door, and the sound of steps in the hall below. Slow, heavy steps—her husband's!

She stood up straight and still. The steps came nearer. Now they were on the stairs. Amid the whirl of emotions that swept over her, she was clearly conscious of but one thing—a desire to escape, to gain time. The reaction had been too sudden, she could not face it now. With a quick movement she thrust the paper behind the couch, and threw herself down as though asleep.

The door opened. There was a moment's pause, then the gentle closing of the door and a careful tiptoeing across the room—the ponderous tiptoeing of a heavy man. Another pause, then a moving of things on the mantel, a search for cigars and matches, more tiptoeing and the creaking of a chair. And now she listened with curious expectancy for the striking of a match. But the silence was profound.

She looked up through half-closed

lids. He was patiently holding the cigar, fearing to light it lest he waken her. The heavy, florid face, the awkward set of the shoulders, the great, ungainly figure—she closed her eyes with a sickening sense of faintness. It had all come back. That one swift glance had brought it all back—all the old impatience, the old intolerance, the old disdain. With all her strength she fought it, struggled fiercely against it. She tried to think of the things she had thought of as she knelt by the chair—his kindness, his patience, his never-failing tenderness. She tried to feel again the pity and remorse she had felt then. She lashed herself with reproaches and accusations. But even as she did it, she knew it to be hopeless.

She sat up quickly—an involuntary movement, a physical protest at the intolerable pain of her thoughts.

And then her eyes fell on her husband. He was asleep—his head thrown back against the chair, his mouth half-open, and an expression almost of idiocy upon his face. She had never seen him look like that—not quite so repulsive as that. No—no—not loathing! She had never loathed him—it had been only disdain—not loathing. Oh, no—no—he must not look like that! She put her hands before her eyes. "John! John!" it was almost a shriek.

He started up. "Why, my dear, what is it?"

"Oh—I—I had such a frightful dream, and I awoke and saw you there—I was so frightened! I thought you were going to Albany."

"Dear, you had better lie down again, you are trembling so."

He came over by her and stroked her hand awkwardly. She drew it away, as though to arrange the pillow at her back.

"Don't you want this other pillow?"

She shook her head.

"No, I didn't go to Albany, we were very busy at the office, and fortunately I put it off. The two-thirty train, the one I would have taken, was wrecked just forty miles out."

"Wrecked?" she repeated it dully.

"Yes—a horrible wreck. I was afraid you would see the extra and be frightened, so I tried to telephone you that I hadn't gone, but could get no answer. You must have been asleep."

"Yes—I must have been asleep."

He took a paper from his pocket and began reading her the headlines. Could she ever forget them—those headlines? The corners of her mouth twitched as she thought how glibly

she could repeat them and how astonished he would be if she should.

He laid the paper aside. "It was a horrible wreck—the worst that road has ever had."

"Yes—it was horrible."

"I am glad you were asleep and did not see the extra. You might have been worried."

She smiled faintly, her eyes on the torn braid of the chair.

"Yes, I might have been worried."



EMBARKMENT

USELESS, and cast like seaweed on the shore,
Where children yet may find it in their play,
Lies my discarded Book of Yesterday—
Of yesterday, and all that came before.
And only yesterday I prized it more
Than nun her missal when she loves to pray,
And through its pages let my fancy stray
'Midst dim enchanted realms of love and lore.

And often, with eyes kindling from the tale,
I seemed to view strange pageantries unfurl
Bright phantom banners in a phantom breeze.
But that is past, and now tumultuous seas
Shout to the far horizon, and I hurl
My ship upon the waters, and set sail.

MAISIE SHAINWALD.



GRAFT

ALICE—How did you feel when that old millionaire proposed to you?

GERTRUDE—I felt how thankful I should be that I lived in an age of commercialism.



IT would be much easier to die for some people than to live with them.

FATE

I WAITED for my Heart's Desire
 Who seemed about to call;
 The livelong week of windy blue
 I sat within my hall;
 The days they tapped upon the pane,
 I would not hear at all.

I neither walked nor worked; I sent
 Excuses everywhere.
 I was not in to my best friend
 Lest he should interfere,
 (Since not for worlds would I have had
 Her come and find him there.)

The kettle steamed upon the hob,
 Her chair stood near at hand,
 The little cakes she loved so well
 Smoked savory on the stand;
 The tea was just upon the brew,
 Her flavored favorite brand.

All these to coax my Heart's Desire
 To stay a while and chat,
 To smile upon my cozy hearth
 (The cozier for that),
 To drink a cup or two with me—
 Maybe take off her hat!

The wind brought mist; the mist began
 In drizzling clouds to settle,
 And still I piled the glowing coals
 And still refilled the kettle.
 For hope oft brewed is still renewed—
 But tea's not of that mettle.

The shop was near; no one should serve
 My Heart's Desire but me.
 So I dashed out and back again,
 As quick as man could be,
 To find she'd called and left her card—
 It was a p. p. c.!

ALGERNON TASSIN.



A MAN who is so wise that he can refrain from writing love-letters at the critical period, should have a bachelor's degree added to his name.

THE WOLF-PRINCE

By John Regnault Ellyson

VERY old people in Richmond may still remember M. Gustave Piron, who left France while young, came across the waters and settled there. Nephew of a Marseillais juggler and son of a Parisian dancing-master, he chose neither his uncle's nor his father's profession.

For many years he kept a wine-shop in the third house above Franklin on the east side of Governor street. It was a wine-shop at which no drinkers gathered and regaled themselves; Piron, supplying an altogether different class of trade, handled only the choicest imported wines and liqueurs.

He was niggardly and shrewd. He was polite, of course, and very smooth and honeyed if something were to be gained. For a Frenchman, he was rather serious and rather uncommonly uncommunicative. He never quite mastered English. He talked less with his faltering tongue than with his supple hands. In fact, he always managed to display their symmetry, their unrivaled whiteness, the perfection of their nails. If vain of his hands, he could certainly not well have been vain of aught else, his head being prodigiously large and bushy, his face broad, his eyes beady, his body round and his legs twisted.

This serious man, who was nevertheless droll, acquired a fair reputation for the goodly name of Gustave Piron. He made a little fortune and remained a bachelor until fifty. At that age, he visited France and brought back a wife—his uncle's granddaughter, according to his own clear statement, and yet, owing to subsequent occurrences, numbers entertained doubts

on this point. But be that as it may, Madame Piron was a superlatively beautiful woman—so beautiful that some fancied she must unquestionably have married through pique or caprice, and some believed she had simply been purchased as one purchases an ornament for the house—say, a rare piece of shapely marble.

She was rare and shapely and ornamental, though she was anything but a piece of marble. She was a young, dark, picturesque, animated, laughing Frenchwoman. She possessed a figure to be proud of—pliant and serpentine and exceedingly graceful in its every movement. Her head was one of nature's fine gifts—superb and well poised, and crowned with a silky cloud of luxuriant black hair, usually coquettishly arranged. She had the Southern mouth, small, pulpy, warm—the opening bud of a crimson rose, and truly Oriental eyes—the eyes of the antelope, liquid and jeweled and languorous. She bore herself, it was thought, as though she were somewhat out of her sphere, somewhat better than the petty circle in which she moved; she dressed with taste and elegance, spoke with a caressing, musical accent and laughed like those naïve children of a certain temperament who regard the great world as half a jest.

There were susceptible gallants in those days as in these days, and she got to be the pet topic and toast of such as caught glimpses of her charms—perhaps the more alluring because the occasions were so infrequent, and yet none could vaunt the favor of the merest word from her or the

slightest equivocal glance. Madame, indeed, nestled close beside monsieur and monsieur absolutely adored madame.

During two years, apparently very happy, they lived quietly over the shop, appeared seldom in public and received now and then some few friends, all of whom were French. The gallants and the enterprising gossips—for there were gossips, too, in those days—could gather little from these or from the two persons who regularly took their meals at the house, though lodging elsewhere—Louis, the prim and stiffish clerk, and Larry, the brawny Irish lad who kept things clean. Marietta, another in the household, occupying the kitchen by day and the room over the kitchen by night, was a mulatto slave, then and afterward thoroughly devoted to her master, who had rescued her from the cruelties of a New Orleans negro-trader. So, you will observe, the details of domestic life there, whether worthy of comment or not, were almost as unknown to the gallants, the gossips and the rest of the outside world as if the place had been a nunnery.

However, after Piron's marriage, nothing in the least singular happened in his career until one evening in 1854, at which time the even flow and pleasing monotony of two years suddenly crystallized into an event very much more singular than his marriage. It was the nine days' wonder of the old town. Everybody cocked up his ears and rolled the matter over on his tongue. Even Piron's intimate friends talked.

At twilight on that early October evening, two fantastic old barouches, each drawn by a pair of black horses, well-groomed and spirited, stopped in front of monsieur's little wine-shop. Monsieur, who closed his place generally at dark, was standing near the window, through which came the fading rays of daylight, in the cozy rear apartment from which, by a small, curtained archway and a descent of a single step, the shop was easily accessible. He was washing his hands and

thinking of having the shutters put up, when, hearing the wheels on the cobblestones and the barouches halt, and judging the occupants to be customers, straightway called Larry, the lad, to light the pendent shop-lamp, and Louis, the clerk, to open the door, while he finished washing and leisurely wiped his hands, since he deemed it less inexcusable to hasten over his prayers or the counting of change than to shorten the time and lessen in any degree the care bestowed upon his hands.

The clerk, on opening the door, saw in the gray of the evening four persons get slowly out of one barouche and three persons descend from the second, and he saw, also, that the last of these received from the others every mark of extreme civility and regard. As the seven persons filed into the wine-shop the lad, having luckily completed his task, was seized with a fit of trembling and turned deathly pale. And well he might, for he had never beheld, here or anywhere, a spectacle so utterly unlooked for or so utterly uncommon.

The seven individuals were attired in a semi-Oriental, semi-barbaric style that was very bizarre and at first glance startling. The prevailing colors of their really handsome costumes were vividly yellow and purple. Six of the group were robust, athletic men with dark, fiery eyes and full, black beards.

The seventh, to whom the rest showed profound deference, was not so tall and not so largely made. He was sinewy and lithe. He had considerable ease and dignity of bearing—a very distinguished air. He wore purple trousers reaching to his ankles and caught in the Turkish fashion, slippers of the same hue tied with yellow ribbons, an exquisitely embroidered yellow silk shirt fastened at the waist with a broad belt of variously tinted metal braid, and from his shoulders, half-displaying and half-concealing his figure, fell a long burnous of rich purple, woven of some strange fleece, yet in texture apparently as light as gossamer. His hair was hid-

den under an enormous turban prettily and artistically coiled. From his bosom three decorations, brightly incrustated with gems, depended by ribbons.

But even more remarkable than his apparel was his face. It was grayish brown and shaped to a point, puffed at the upper cheeks and sparsely bearded. The ears were short and straight. The nose was delicately ridged, like that of some animals, and, like that of some animals, too, the wings of its nostrils were clipped. The slanting eyes, small and set far apart, were green and amazingly scintillant. All in all, there was here a curious mixture of the wolfish and the human—a face perfect of its kind, at once unique, repellent, fascinating and memorable.

The seven persons, despite their Corsair countenances and their splendidly barbaric display of colors, seemed particularly mild-mannered. They were as suave as the creatures that dreamers meet in the dales of Arcadia or in the forest of Arden. They moved about without any perceptible noise, and spoke together softly in a foreign language.

M. Piron, in coming forward and parting the curtains, scented in the air an unfamiliar odor, the faint but distinct odor that clings to the rare fabrics and priceless tissues brought from the remote corners of the earth—from Teheran or Bagdad or Damascus. "This and the vision of the seven devils," as he expressed it afterward, caused him to miss the step and twist his ankle. He felt a dizziness and a slight nausea, and believed for a second or so that the whole company, instead of having entered the shop by the door, had somehow mounted from the underground.

He clutched at the back of a chair and steadied his portly figure. The sensation, in part at least, passed off immediately, and, though he was by no means yet entirely himself, the trade instinct awoke and, in anticipation of a first-class order, he bowed with a very fair show of grace—a salutation that was courteously returned.

"Monsieur," said one of the attendants, speaking in excellent French and advancing a little as he spoke, "monsieur, his highness, the Prince Abhalabad, having heard of your great reputation has come in person to procure——"

"There, my good Bababalouk," said the prince, gently interrupting the attendant, "we will waive all ceremony."

Heavens—a prince? Could it be possible? Among his customers monsieur had the President of the United States, Justices of the Supreme Bench, ambassadors, senators, governors and some few of these dignitaries had visited his wine-shop, but a veritable prince—it was incredible. It took him as the wind takes a kite; indeed, it took him back to his boyish years, back to Marseilles, back to Paris, where such sights had been seen. And the prince, who might have stepped out of the Arabian Nights, spoke with the accent of a Parisian; it was so unaccountable—it was overwhelming.

And here, in the same moment, the prince, approaching the astonished Piron, shook his hand cordially, almost as one presses that of an equal, of a neighbor. As this happened, lights played across monsieur's broad face, little bells rang in his ears and all his pulses fluttered, not merely because he now touched royal fingers for the first time, but in some measure because the fingers were so infinitely delicate and warm and velvety. To him the quality of a wine was hardly better known than the quality of a hand—or so he flattered himself.

But the prince, on his part and at the same instant, likewise made a discovery.

"Why, monsieur," said he, "with charming affability, as he lifted Piron's hand fully in view, "unquestionably, monsieur—unquestionably you have the finest hand in the world."

"Nay, not so; pardon me, your highness," Piron answered, scarcely aware of what he did say until after it was said; "no, *that* belongs to my wife——"

Then he closed his mouth with a click as an oyster closes its shell.

Surprised at himself, abashed, exceedingly vexed, he could have bitten off his tongue as soon as the words had escaped. How gross-witted! What blundering and stupidity! What a headlong fool he would be taken for, what a rattle-pan! Not only had he dragged, as it were, his wife into the presence of the prince, but he had lost the opportunity—the most admirable opportunity of using the very phrase—aye, the very expressive phrase as a fitting compliment to his highness.

The prince, as though nothing had gone amiss, smiled, showing just the white edges of his dazzling teeth, and replied:

"Indeed—then you must be happy, for the hand has its beauties as the eye has and more far-reaching powers. We of the East know the value of the hand. We know it is not the sword, monsieur, nor the pen that rules the world, but the hand, and the same hand often delves and builds, soothes and heals as well as it charms and controls. But come, monsieur; as Bababalouk has said, I dropped in to purchase a case of Manzanilla—a wine which I have grown incredibly fond of——"

"A wonderful wine," exclaimed monsieur; "dry, still, aromatic, nutty——"

The ground being put under his feet and the key to the commercial theme given, monsieur was speaking flowingly in French and by the catalogue.

"I wish to settle the bill now," interposed the prince pleasantly, "but the wine can be sent to my rooms at the Swan Tavern in the morning."

"Ah, and would your highness sample the Manzanilla?"

"I rely wholly upon monsieur," said the prince.

Monsieur bowed with the compliment chiming in his ears and with the world on his shoulders. This thrusting of greatness upon him in the person of the prince left him everything to think of, everything to devise, everything to do. How besotted was the inactivity of his assistants! The clerk

had not quit the door; the Irish lad was glued between a rundlet and the folding-ladder. And yet—and yet the prince was still standing.

Monsieur looked first toward the clerk, then toward the lad. He raised his hand and raised his voice.

"Chairs, Louis!—chairs, Larry! and quickly, if you please."

Whereupon Louis let go the knob of the door and Larry swallowed the lump in his throat and felt the legs of the ladder and his own quivering afresh.

The prince seemed amused. There were two chairs visible and the getting together of a requisite number might disorder the household. This is probably what he thought, but certainly it was not what he expressed in words.

"No, no," said the prince. "Thanks, monsieur. We will stand while you kindly make out the account."

The prince was so thoughtful; he threw forth a hint so gently—in such soft, brief terms and with the truly delightful Parisian accent. Yes, the account, of course—the account in which the name of the prince should be forever coupled with the name of Gustave Piron. And the account was soon very prettily made out, considering Piron's agitation. It was presented; it was settled.

Monsieur, whose curiosity was now stirring and whose mind began chasing after several wherefores and whys, and imagining he had regained his wonted composure, ventured to say:

"Your highness has done me too much honor and I am deeply sensible of the favors shown, but may I have the boldness to ask how—or rather when, or perhaps I should have said—where——?"

The prince smiled.

"I anticipated your question," said he very graciously. "I understand. By especial arrangements, you see, my dear monsieur, we are here to give a performance at the theatre tonight—a single performance which we trust will both surprise and please the good people of your town. And, by the way," continued the prince in most

ingratiating tones, "will you not add to my pleasure of having met you by accepting a box for yourself and Mme. de Piron? I shall only be too glad to place one at your disposal that you may see what some of the descendants of the old Arabic conquerors can do in the lighter amusements of the day—in dancing, jugglery and legerdemain."

Ah, what a grand air and what simple but noble gestures! What a remarkable man! And he knew monsieur by reputation. How singular it was—a prince who was a stage-player. How extremely generous, too, was the affable prince. Yes, a box for the occasion! And monsieur—by the spirit of his dancing father and his juggling uncle, how could monsieur decline?

He did not. He received the admission slip—an autographic card, which was something astonishing in itself, bowed and bowed again, recovered his use of speech and continued his courtesies and deferential attentions until the prince and his attendants, passing out upon the pavement, reentered their barouches; and then he watched those fantastic barouches slowly disappear along the wall of the governor's garden into the dust and darkness of the street.

When monsieur, tremulous and aflush, with colors fluttering before his eyes and voices sweetly humming in his ears, stepped back into his wine-shop, Mme. Piron, who had witnessed the indescribably odd scene through the door-hangings of the rear apartment, advanced and threw herself into his arms.

"I saw the barouches from my window, dear," she said, "and stole down here and heard everything—oh, how wonderful!"

"Wonderful—that is the word," said monsieur, "that is the word."

"What have you there, dear?"

"These?" said monsieur. "Ah, see!—bright gold pieces, love! And here—look at the prince's marvelous signature."

"Indeed, is it not curious, dear?"

"Very curious, very rare, very extraordinary," said monsieur.

"It is a cipher, I think, or is it not, Gustave?"

"Plainly a cipher, or I know not what," said monsieur, "all, as it were, little ink-blots or little fly-specks. The prince wrote it in an instant. He seizes the pen, touches the card—bah! it is done all in a flash."

"And we will go, dear, and see the strange performance?" murmured madame.

"How?—why, necessarily—of course."

Madame leaned her cheek against the shoulder of her spouse, hung upon his arm, laughed with bewitching sweetness and babbled drowsily like a child to whom the sandman had promised glimpses of new fairylands, and for whom the unexplored regions held attractions more alluring than heaven's.

At the theatre that night the couple, who seldom appeared in public places, occupied seats in one of the prominent boxes and failed not to occasion a great deal of comment among the animated and brilliant audience. Though monsieur was pomaded and perfumed and dressed evidently with considerable care, and though his lolling bulk, his fine jowls, his gorgeous waistcoat drew remarks from the wags, he can scarcely be said to have shared full honors with Mme. Piron. In fact, it was she who, handsomely and elegantly attired and looking the very picture of superb and insouciant beauty, aroused the chief interest—she who, seen by large numbers for the first time, received envious or admiring glances from all sides—she who, unconcerned and bewilderingly charming, led many a lively gallant repeatedly to exclaim:

"Damn me, isn't Frenchy the luckiest dog in Christendom?"

At eight o'clock the curtain rolled up and the entertainment began. The initial feature on the program was a sort of minstrelsy, in which the entire troupe of fifteen took part. There were some good singing, some quaint

and telling instrumental effects. Next came a distinctively Oriental dance, quite modest, but novel and stately, by four very lovely Arabian women. Then followed a short sentimental drama—a harem scene, which was hardly intelligible, but extremely picturesque, and succeeding this were some hazardous and exceptionally clever slack-wire feats gracefully done by the prince himself, who was applauded to the echo, was persistently recalled, and at last again made to go through his really remarkable performance.

During the intermission between part the first and part the second, the prince, through Bababalouk, expressed his desire to meet Mme. de Piron. Monsieur, however much ordinarily he might have bristled at the suggestion, was so carried away for the time that he eagerly assented. The prince entered the box none the worse from his recent exercises. Courtesies and compliments were exchanged. The prince lingered and gave fresh proof of his consummate tact, his graces of manner, his mastery of French. He was suave, gracious, particularly interesting and positively fascinating. Madame, in whose languorous eyes shone new lights, was never more radiant, and yet never more discreet and collected. Monsieur, who, broad and beaming, rocked from side to side on his chair and incessantly fluttered his hands, was all enthusiasm. The prince before leaving mentioned that he had resolved to double his order in the morning, because he despaired of getting true Manzanilla from anyone in this country but "dear M. de Piron."

The second part of the performance commenced as soon as the prince had retired from the box. First, there were some acrobatic groupings and admirable tumbling. Then came a queer kind of slow-measured dance on a ladder of swords accomplished by two women, robed like priestesses and with sandals removed. Then they presented a little burlesque drama in which the main action, as well as the gestures and grimaces and by-play, was infinitely laughable. This was

followed by music; it was rather weird and a trifle monotonous, perhaps, but singularly impressive; the musicians used very old and unfamiliar instruments, every hidden quality of which they knew. That part—and indeed the whole performance—ended with several exhibitions of magic that taxed the skill of the prince and his fourteen assistants. Many of these were thrilling, notably the last, which may be very briefly described.

The act, be it remembered, was done rapidly, breathlessly. The prince approached the footlights and stood there in full view just between two oblong, white, fleecy rugs outspread upon the stage. To the beating of tom-toms and the whining of pipes, two handsome women, a blonde and a brunette, were led forward as captive slaves and placed in a recumbent position on either side of the prince—the blonde gowned in yellow on his left and the brunette gowned in purple on his right. Immediately the prince, by two strokes of his drawn yataghan—this way and that, decapitated them, quickly covering their bodies each with a mantle and tossing their heads in a basket, which an assistant carried off at once behind the scenes. The prince then fell on his knees, lifted his eyes and muttered an incantation. The tom-toms throbbed lugubriously and the pipes wailed. The prince then arose, drew aside the mantles and set the ladies on their feet. What was lacking?—nothing. Their beautiful heads, indeed, were in place, or rather the head of the blonde was on the brunette's body gowned in purple, and the brunette's head was on the blonde's body gowned in yellow.

The audience, still shivering, applauded round after round, and the prince appeared before the curtain more than a dozen times.

Piron was immensely moved. Flattered by innumerable glances from the stage and amazed at what he had witnessed, he easily outdid all others. He got himself red in the face and wet in the collar. His gloves were reduced to ribbons.

Madame also applauded and smiled and let her eyes follow admiringly the person of the prince. Like one charming and being charmed, she seemed in a feverish quiver of pleasurable excitement.

The Piron on their way home chatted without ceasing. At home, continuing to prattle on the one great subject, they had a light supper and a bottle of the famous Manzanilla—"dry, still, aromatic and nutty," in the words of monsieur and the catalogue.

Then they retired, but not until after Piron himself had gone through the house, peeped into the shop, examined the closets and odd corners and seen that all the doors were properly fastened and all the blinds drawn in and caught—monsieur being an ever-watchful and extraordinarily prudent man.

Now, because of the unaccustomed yet agreeable exercises of the evening, the superior quality of the wine he drank, the extreme lateness of the hour at which he retired and the sense of absolute ease and security, monsieur fell asleep almost as soon as he stretched himself in bed. But it happened—as it often happens with us—that he had not slept very long, or so he fancied, when all at once he awoke. He was under the impression that a warm, soft, velvety hand had swept across his face. He brushed his own hand through his hair and touched his brow; both were slightly moist. His nostrils now caught an odor with which he was not altogether unfamiliar—a delicate but very distinct odor.

In thinking of this rare essence of roses and of the velvety hand he immediately thought of the prince. His heart played a sharp tattoo and chilly little needles crept over his limbs, and yet he said to himself:

"What nonsense—what nonsense! In the morning, how my wife will laugh at me!"

He was in his cozy chamber, in his good, warm bed. He was rather surprised, however, that he could see

nothing—that the chamber was so dark, though he himself had closed the pea-green Venetian blinds to exclude the moonbeams and the first ghostly glimmer of dawn. In the spring and summer and early autumn, monsieur was usually awakened, not by the dawning lights nor the sun, but by the twittering birds in the governor's garden across the way.

In the next instant, he remembered with a glow that his wife, contrary to custom, was at his side. To be certain of it, he extended his hand—gently, so as not to arouse her, but here in his wife's place was a pillow and the coverlets were twisted about the pillow. Ah—what could have happened? For half a moment he lay perfectly still except for the thumping of his heart, and listened. He could hear, or at any rate he imagined he could hear, a catlike tread, the creaking of the stairs and strange words murmured remotely in the distance. He shuddered, but at once sought to reassure himself.

"Bah! what foolery," said he. "Why, the truth is madame has gone to her room! What more natural?"

Nevertheless, he sprang up, fumbled for matches and lighted the lamp. No—nobody was in the room—not even his wife. The door—ah, the door was ajar. In the hall there should have been a light, but the small lamp had been removed or extinguished. This was, indeed, unexpected, very unusual; the lamp was always kept dimly burning there at night.

His crooked legs tangled themselves and he trembled as he lifted the chamber-lamp and stepped into the hall, but, summoning all his courage then and treading as softly as possible so as not to unnecessarily alarm his wife, he made his way to madame's apartment. The door of her room was also open and on the threshold he stopped, shaded the lamp and listened to catch the faint sound of the lady's breathing. He heard nothing. Under the tremendous excitement of the moment he quivered like a reed. He slipped or glided forward, turned the

light full on the bed, shrieked and fell.

The bed was empty.

The sunshine was streaming through the autumn foliage in the governor's garden across the way and the late birds were singing, when the clerk and the Irish lad, finding the shop doors unbolted and the master not there, mounted the stairs and discovered monsieur lying on the chamber floor insensible and with the extinguished lamp on the edge of the rug by his side. He was not revived until long after the physician arrived.

For two days the patient remained in a fevered and delirious condition, constantly speaking of his wife and of every event of that fateful night, but also speaking of a good many other things, of which, however, no one could make heads or tails. The whole of the third day he slept. Then, under the care of the physician, he gradually recovered and by the end of a fortnight he went down into his shop.

Shortly afterward he began to give his attention to business and, in continuing the task of increasing his little fortune, he displayed his wonted shrewdness and prudence.

He never—except while in the delirious state—alluded to his wife; happily, she seemed to have been as completely blotted from his memory as if she had never existed.

He still bestowed particular care upon his hands with which, as has been said, he talked more than with his tongue that faltered in English. He was always now in a pleasant mood, always affable. He was very fraternal with his friends, for whom he could not do enough—whom he could not see too often.

He showed an exceedingly curious predilection for two colors—purple and yellow. Flowers, trinkets, ornaments

that were purple he purchased; he had his furniture upholstered in purple. It was the same with things in yellow—gloves, for instance, the bedroom china, the paper on the wall. At one time he owned many cages of canaries and two yellow cats, though he had no fondness for those of a different color.

On feast days and on civic holidays he closed his shop and indulged in innocent freaks. He dressed somewhat extravagantly, then mixed with people, visited places of amusement and took part in light sports, or, as more frequently happened, he surrounded himself with his comrades and got himself mildly intoxicated.

In the miniature pavilion, which he built in his rear yard, he regaled and entertained these intimate friends. Here sometimes he produced a bagpipe with drum and cymbal attachments and he played on it as well as a bagpipe is ever played on—an accomplishment not in the least heroic at best. Here, now and again, he exhibited his dexterity in tossing up knives and tinted balls and doing other of his uncle's tricks, which he had doubtless learned when a boy, and in performing a sort of acrobatic dance taught him possibly by that excellent Parisian dancer, his father. More than once he made a grotesque attempt at slack-rope walking, and once—but only once—he undertook to decapitate his twin pet cats, and failed, chiefly owing to the nervous nature and the agility of his subjects.

These and such diversions on special days, however, did not interfere with business and did not often overstep the modesty of permissible eccentricity.

"There's a little screw loose somewhere," said his physician one day to the new French consul, who had been questioning him about M. Piron—"there's a little screw loose somewhere, but just where I can't tell."

THE MARTYRS

A LIFE-STUDY IN ONE SCENE

By William C. de Mille

CHARACTERS

MR. MEEKS (*married six months*).

MRS. MEEKS (*his wife*).

SCENE.—*The dining-room. Mr. and Mrs. MEEKS are just finishing dinner.*

MR. MEEKS (*starting to light a cigar*)—Now, dear, don't be long in dressing, will you?

MRS. MEEKS—George, you always provoke me when you say that. Do I ever keep you waiting?

MR. MEEKS (*hastily*)—No, no! That is, not often.

MRS. MEEKS—I haven't for a long time, have I?

MR. MEEKS—Well—er—not if you don't count yesterday.

MRS. MEEKS—That's very unkind of you, George. You know it wasn't my fault; I wrote the note as quickly as I could.

MR. MEEKS (*apologetically*)—Of course you did; I was only joking.

A pause, during which Mr. MEEKS smokes and Mrs. MEEKS folds up her napkin deliberately.

MR. MEEKS—Well, where shall we go tonight?

MRS. MEEKS—Oh, anywhere you like, dear.

MR. MEEKS—What do you feel like seeing?

MRS. MEEKS—I'd much rather have you choose.

MR. MEEKS—Well, you know it always rests me to go to a good vaudeville show.

MRS. MEEKS (*with a sigh which she takes care only to half conceal*)—All right.

MR. MEEKS (*noticing the sigh*)—But you don't care for vaudeville, do you?

MRS. MEEKS (*looking like a Christian martyr*)—Oh, yes, I think it is very funny—sometimes. (*Sighs again.*)

MR. MEEKS—But you don't feel like it tonight—is that it?

MRS. MEEKS (*rising sadly*)—Oh, no, I'll go and dress. I shall probably enjoy it very much—only—

MR. MEEKS (*avoiding her eye*)—Only what?

MRS. MEEKS (*slowly and reluctantly*)—You know this is the last week of "Hamlet."

MR. MEEKS (*looking at the ceiling*)—Oh—"Hamlet"!

MRS. MEEKS (*turning as if to go, with a very mournful expression*)—But I guess we'd enjoy the other much more.

MR. MEEKS (*with a resigned look*)—Oh, no, let's go to "Hamlet," if you'd rather.

MRS. MEEKS (*turning to him again*)—I think you'd rather go to the vaudeville thing.

MR. MEEKS (*looking steadily at the chandelier*)—Oh, no, I'd just as soon see "Hamlet."

MRS. MEEKS—Would you, really?

MR. MEEKS (*irritably*)—Of course, dear, of course; go and get on your things.

MRS. MEEKS *looks doubtfully at him, then crosses slowly to the door. As she reaches it he speaks.*

MR. MEEKS—I thought you'd seen "Hamlet."

MRS. MEEKS (*pausing*)—Yes, but it was years ago.

MR. MEEKS (*sighing bitterly*)—All right. Go on, dear; we'll be late.

MRS. MEEKS (*advancing once more*)—Are you sure you'd just as soon see "Hamlet"?

MR. MEEKS (*looking glum and speaking with conscious hesitation*)—Why—er—yes, I guess so.

MRS. MEEKS (*sadly*)—Why don't you be honest with me, dear?

MR. MEEKS (*tentatively*)—Well, then, perhaps I'd just a little rather go to the vaudeville show.

MRS. MEEKS (*submissively starting for the door*)—All right, dear.

MR. MEEKS—Oh, for heaven's sake, don't look like that! Let's go to "Hamlet," and be done with it.

MRS. MEEKS (*virtuously*)—No, I shouldn't enjoy it a bit now.

MR. MEEKS—But, my dear girl, don't you see that I'd much rather go to "Hamlet" and have you happy than to the vaudeville and have you miserable?

MRS. MEEKS—It's unkind of you to speak to me like that, George, when you know I'm only trying to do what will give you the most pleasure.

MR. MEEKS—That's just it; you ought to let me do what will give you the most pleasure sometimes. You want to go to "Hamlet," and I say I shall enjoy it more than the other because you want it.

MRS. MEEKS—Then you insist on going to "Hamlet"?

MR. MEEKS (*emphatically*)—Yes, I do.

MRS. MEEKS (*looking more mournful than before and speaking in a dead tone*)—All right; let's go to "Hamlet."

MR. MEEKS (*with repressed fury*)—Why do you say it in that tone?

MRS. MEEKS (*very gently*)—Isn't it a little selfish of you, dear, to insist on doing what I want when it gives me such pleasure to do what you want?

MR. MEEKS—Then you would rather go to the vaudeville?

MRS. MEEKS (*avoiding his eye*)—Yes, George, really I would.

MR. MEEKS (*slowly and dejectedly*)—All right, the vaudeville it is.

MRS. MEEKS (*with sudden abnegation*)—No, George, forgive me. I didn't know you felt that way about it. Come, we'll go to "Hamlet."

MR. MEEKS (*kissing her*)—No, dearest, I was wrong; I'll take you to the vaudeville.

MRS. MEEKS (*brightly*)—All right, dear; how long have I to dress?

MR. MEEKS (*looking at his watch*)—Great Scott—!

MRS. MEEKS—What's the matter?

MR. MEEKS—It's nine forty-five!

CURTAIN



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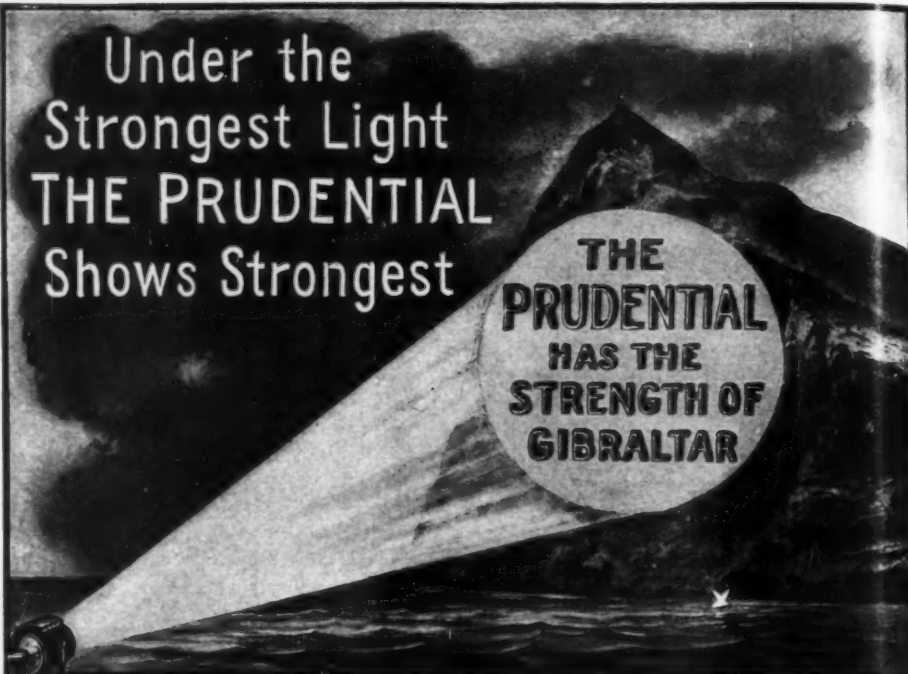
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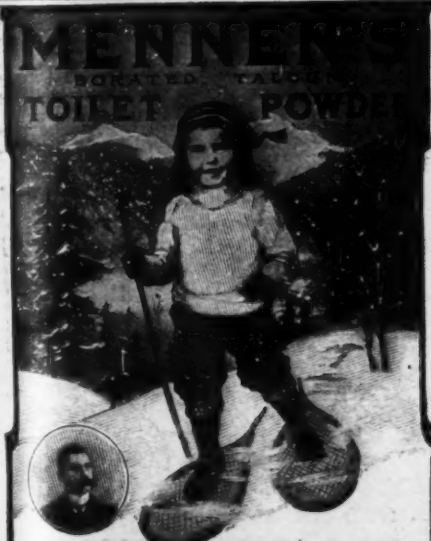
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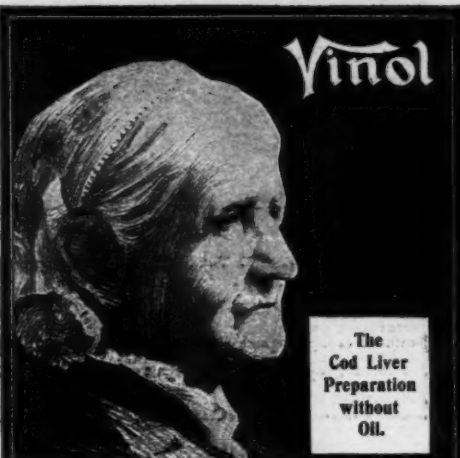
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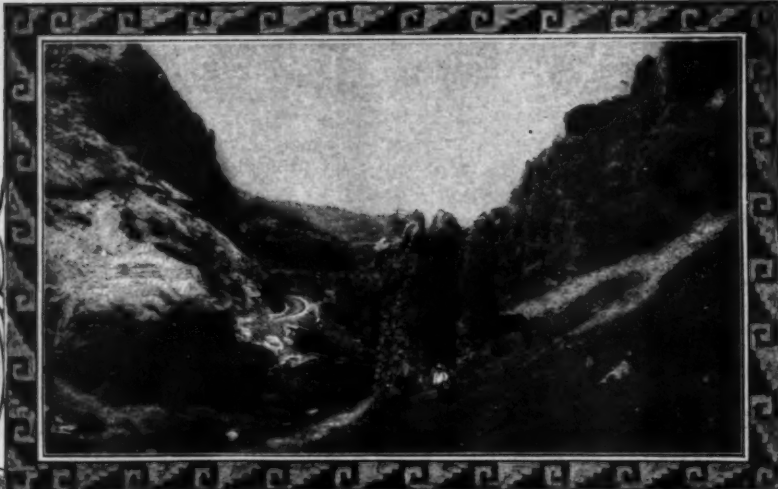
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SOUTH-BOUND.

Lv. ST. LOUIS.....	via IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	9.00 a. m.,	Tue.	Fri.
Lv. LITTLE ROCK.....	via IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	7.00 p. m.,	Tue.	Fri.
Lv. TEXARKANA.....	TEXAS & PACIFIC.....	11.40 p. m.,	Tue.	Fri.
Lv. LONGVIEW JUNCTION.....	I. & G. N. E. R.....	2.40 a. m.,	Wed.	Sat.
Lv. PALESTINE.....	I. & G. N. E. R.....	5.10 a. m.,	Wed.	Sat.
Lv. SAN ANTONIO.....	I. & G. N. E. R.....	1.30 p. m.,	Wed.	Sat.
Ar. LAREDO.....	I. & G. N. E. R.....	6.00 p. m.,	Wed.	Sat.
Ar. MONTEREY.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	11.35 p. m.,	Wed.	Sat.
Ar. SALTILLO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	2.45 a. m.,	Thu.	Sun.
Ar. CITY OF MEXICO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	8.30 p. m.,	Thu.	Sun.

NORTH-BOUND.

Lv. CITY OF MEXICO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	7.15 a. m.,	Tue.	Sat.
Lv. SALTILLO.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	1.15 a. m.,	Wed.	Sun.
Lv. MONTEREY.....	NATIONAL LINES OF MEXICO.....	4.15 a. m.,	Wed.	Sun.
Lv. LAREDO.....	I. & G. N. E. R.....	11.15 a. m.,	Wed.	Sun.
Lv. SAN ANTONIO.....	I. & G. N. E. R.....	4.15 p. m.,	Wed.	Sun.
Lv. PALESTINE.....	I. & G. N. E. R.....	12.05 a. m.,	Thu.	Mon.
Lv. LONGVIEW JUNCTION.....	TEXAS & PACIFIC.....	2.35 a. m.,	Thu.	Mon.
Lv. TEXARKANA.....	IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	5.35 a. m.,	Thu.	Mon.
Ar. LITTLE ROCK.....	IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	9.40 a. m.,	Thu.	Mon.
Ar. ST. LOUIS.....	IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.....	8.00 p. m.,	Thu.	Mon.

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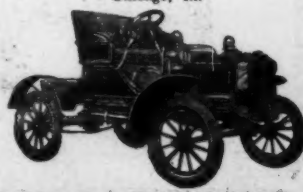
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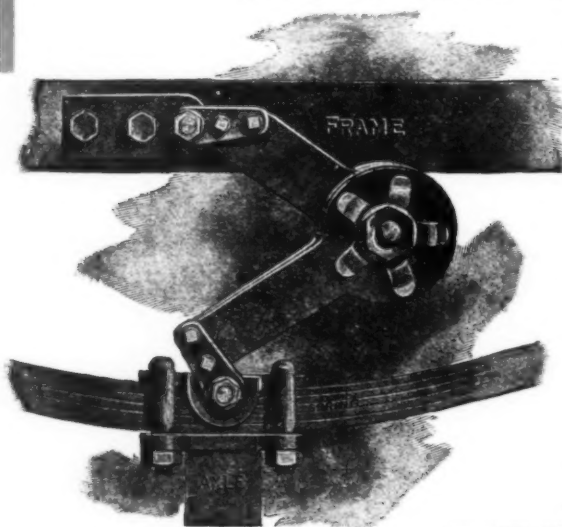
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